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# TRUST and REPUTATION

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## BledCom 2019

26<sup>th</sup> International Public  
Relations Research Symposium

July 4 - 6, 2019 | Bled, Slovenia

Organized by:



University of Ljubljana  
Faculty of Social Sciences

### Trust and Reputation

Book of Abstracts of the 26<sup>th</sup> International Public Relations  
Research Symposium BledCom

July 4 - 6, 2019 | Bled, Slovenia

**EDITORS:** Dejan Verčič, Ana Tkalac Verčič and Krishnamurthy Sriramesh





### **Trust and Reputation**

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Dear Friends and Colleagues,

**Welcome! Dobrodošli! Swagatam!**

Trust is a foundation of social (and organizational) order and also serves as the underpinning of healthy relationships, exchanges and transactions. There is a growing concern globally that social and organizational trust is eroding, and that it has become harder for organizations to build and protect relationships with stakeholders many of whom themselves seem to be in conflict. Digitalization and globalization have contributed significantly to changing the world order, leaving many people confused, disoriented and perhaps even scared. This has also contributed to people's lack of trust in basic social institutions. Conspiracy theories are on the rise on a variety of topics. The ultra-rich are preparing for an apocalypse and building bunker-homes in New Zealand. In many countries there appears to be increasing support for authoritarian leaders because of their promise to protect against a disruptive future. In this respect, one is reminded of Bob Dylan's song: "The times they are a changin'."

In such a challenging environment, how does/should public relations (re)build trust and reputation to help us function as social beings operating in harmonious societies? This is the focus of the 26<sup>th</sup> edition of BledCom: **TRUST AND REPUTATION**. We welcome you and look forward to an engaging conference!

**Thank you! Lep pozdrav! Namaste!**



**Dejan VERČIČ**, *University of Ljubljana (Slovenia)*

He is professor, head of Department of Communication and head of Centre for Marketing and Public Relations at the University of Ljubljana, Slovenia. He received his PhD in social psychology in 2000 from the London School of Economics and Political Science. He is a former Fulbright scholar. He has published over 200 articles and book chapters and 12 books. He is a member of the European Communication Monitor research team, a fellow of the Chartered Institute of Public Relations (UK), a honorary member of the Croatian Public Relations Association, and a past president and a current member of the European Public Relations Education and Research Association. In 2016 he was awarded the Pathfinder Award, the highest academic honour bestowed by the Institute for Public Relations (IPR) in New York.



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He is Professor and Director of the Professional Masters Program in Corporate Communication at the University of Colorado, USA. He is recognized for his scholarship on global public relations, culture and public relations, corporate social responsibility, and public relations for development. For over 25 years he has advocated the need to reduce ethnocentricity in the public relations body of knowledge and practice in 8 books, over 90 articles and book chapters, and over 120 conference presentations around the world. His rich teaching experiences include teaching at 10 universities on four continents while also delivering seminars/talks in over 40 countries. He has won several awards for teaching and research at different universities. In 2004 he was awarded the prestigious Pathfinder Award from the Institute for Public Relations (USA) for “original scholarly research contributing to the public relations body of knowledge.”



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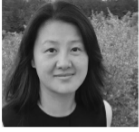
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# Trends, Competences and Solutions for PR/Communications in the near future – results of a Delphi method study

Ana Adi

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## Introduction and purpose of the study

This study identifies the trends, competencies and solutions (current and desired) communication practitioners identify as necessary to maintain relevance and confidence in the profession in the mid-term. A Delphi method study consisting of two rounds of questioning – one qualitative and one quantitative –, it analyses and discusses the responses of 69 communication practitioners occupying leadership positions within their organizations, most of them based in Europe collected during November 2018 and March 2019.

## Literature review

Never has a profession been under so much pressure to reform and further professionalize as public relations is nowadays. The proliferation of technology, including digital and social media channels, the erosion of trust and the movement to the post-truth society with its emphasis of authenticity and questioning of motives and sources of information, and the increasing demands that PR practitioners would become business partners and trusted advisors present practitioners with multiple and complex questions regarding their future and the future of the profession.

Current research only partly addresses these questions. The Global Body of Knowledge (GBOK) for instance undertaken by Global Alliance is especially focused on KSAs and competences, so the micro- and meso-level, with little predictive and future-proofing valences but tremendous benchmarking opportunities. It identifies roles specific for entry, mid- and senior- level jobs and proceeds by listing what knowledge, skills and abilities the PR professional should have.

The Akademische Gesellschaft work focuses specifically on big data competences, making a difference between the individual, training provider and employers. The Global Capabilities Framework (Global Alliance, 2016) developed based on the insight gained from the GBOK incorporates some of Lester's suggestions, focusing on 3 main capabilities for communicators: communication, organizational and professional with 11 sub-capabilities behavioral statements associated with each main capability including communicating effectively across a full range of platforms and technologies, conducting formative and evaluative research, building trust with internal and external stakeholders, building/enhancing organizational reputation, and offering organizational leadership.

For a field that continues to seek its professionalization (see Waddington's blog post on PR not quite being a profession because it doesn't have any required entry point) these frameworks have been long due and necessary. And while they do address what is now consensually agreed as the core of the PR profession: stakeholder orientation, research and evaluation, ethics, responsibility and they do make a strong case of integrated communication, they do so considering PR careers as a straightforward, linear, hierarchical progression: from either entry to senior in the GA Global Framework, from technician stage to emerging practitioner to managerial, directorial and executive leadership in the Australian Government framework or from grades 1 to 7 in the UK Government Communication Network (Macnamara, 2018).

Although only implicitly stated, these frameworks continue to perpetuate the functionalist and excellence models of public relations (see Grunig) where the PR practitioners have managerial aspirations and

their career progressions reflect this incremental accumulation of knowledge and expertise moving from applying what others are directing early practitioners to do to conceptualizing strategies and reviewing them themselves.

*But with agile teams, remote working and changing business models and start-ups growing big fast, is this progression helpful or relevant? This is something this study aims to explore.*

This study reports on what practitioners, members of various associations and educators, consider what would the role, technical and business capabilities and solutions to meet these needs be for PR in the medium term (so the next seven to ten years).

## Methodology

As the projects seeks answers and solutions to future problems, probably inexistent yet, the best way to explore these is through a Delphi Study method enabling thus the researchers to identify whether panels of experts can reach consensus over the matters discussed.

The current study reports on the responses of 69 communication practitioners occupying leadership positions within their organizations. They were identified using a communicators database made available to the researcher in its organization as well as through recommendations and direct contact with various communication associations and academic institutions.

The study used Calibrium, a Delphi method study platform, and featured two rounds. The first round was qualitative (open from November 2018 to January 2019) and consisted of open ended questions covering trends (general, business, technology and social) that practitioners believe will influence communications in the medium term, business and technology competencies and personal attributes needed in order for the practitioners to confidently and successfully tackle the challenges posed by these trends and the solutions currently implemented and deemed desirable by practitioners to address these competencies. The second round was quantitative (opened from February to March 2019) and was based on the insight gained in the first round. The questions and their order was the same, but the participants were asked to rank or indicate the likelihood/impact of the scenarios/trends that they themselves identified.

## Results and conclusions

Among the recurrent social identified by communicators to have a strong impact on PR/Communications in the mid-term are globalization, multiculturalism, diversity and sustainability but also populism, political extremism and polarization of audiences. Speaking of technological trends, the communicators list a wide range of options from the more specific augmented reality, virtual reality, voice assistant applications to the wider Internet of Things, Artificial Intelligence and big data. Asked about business trends, communicators listed CEO activism, disruption and peer to peer trust models (alongside globalization and multiculturalism).

Many of capabilities identified by GA's framework (communication, organizational and professional) find resonance in the communicators' answers regarding the future competences. But perhaps the most interesting are those hinting to professional's need to understand moral frameworks, use of real-time data and big data including ability to create data models for machine learning, a thorough understanding of business and economics as well as mastering project management.

The questions about technical and business competences (and competencies) have been linked questions about solutions offered and solutions desired. The discrepancy is visible. While the desirable options listed are numerous, going from peer to peer, in-house learning and training opportunities to mentoring, coaching and on-demand training, including support of degree education and research, the current solutions are split in between doing nothing or very little to having comprehensive development programs. The challenge, communicators indicate, is either to allocate the right balance of resources (financial and time) to practitioners or to balance between organizational needs and practitioner needs.

## Practical and social implications

PR2025 is a study about the PR for the PR, its results aiming to invite beyond the discussion about the future of the profession (its fears and worries), the identification of the viable solutions organizations could adopt in order to support their communicators. In this sense, the identification of trends (and their polarization) is indicative of the opposing discourses permeating professional, social and media spaces and thus reflective of the challenges faced by communicators. However, the discrepancy between the solutions offered (none, leaving communicators to pursue and identify their own development needed

or more of the same - more communication training for communicators) vs the possibilities identified is worrisome suggesting that although aware of the challenges ahead, communicators and their organizations are too slow to respond. This is likely to deepen the disconnect between educational providers and organizations, increase the uncertainty perceived by professionals and threaten the professionalization of the field. PR2025 is an alarm signal.

### Keywords

*Future trends; PR2025; FuturePR; PR competences*

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# Strategic Public Relations Management: The case of Kuwait

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## Introduction

Arabs have engaged in activities that we see as public relations for thousands of years. However, research on the practice of public relations in the Middle East is still sparse – certainly not in keeping with the importance of region for the world economy or world peace. The purpose of this study is to enrich the body of knowledge of public relations by exploring the status of public relations in Kuwait's three key sectors: governmental, private and non-profit. To accomplish that, we relied on the generic principles of public relations. It is deemed to be acceptable practice to apply a theoretical framework originally developed outside the current context (i.e. Kuwait), given the absence of indigenous empirical research. Such an approach is similar to that by Lim, Goh and Sriramesh (2005) who studied the presence of the strategic management oriented principles in Singapore. To evaluate current public relations practice in Kuwait, the following research questions were formulated.

- RQ1: To what extent do public relations practitioners in Kuwait manage their public relations programmes strategically?
- RQ2: To what extent are public relations practitioners involved in the strategic management of their respective organisations?
- RQ3: What kind of a reporting relationship do public relations departments in Kuwait have with the dominant coalition and senior management?
- RQ4: How effective are the existing public relations models (press agency/publicity, public information, two-way asymmetrical, and two-way symmetrical) in describing public relations activities in Kuwait?
- RQ5: What is the extent of public relations knowledge among practitioners in the public relations departments in Kuwait?

## Literature review

The generic principles of public relations (Vercic, Grunig & Grunig, 1996) are a product of the 'Excellence Study' (Grunig, 1992). Vercic et al. (1996) developed nine principles from 14 characteristics of excellence in public relations programmes derived from the Excellence Study. They proposed that these principles were applicable to different cultures and contexts, once localised to suit the cultural environment. Assessing all the generic principles in one study is quite expansive. So, we chose to address only the four principles that deal with the strategic management of public relations. We identified the following research questions to guide our study:

## Methodology

The data were gathered using a self-administered questionnaire as well as qualitative interviews. Purposive sampling was applied in the present study "to identify particular types of cases for in-depth investigation to gain a deeper understanding of types" (Neuman, 2010, p.268). The data set consisted of 75 respondents - 38 from government organisations, 21 from private companies, one from a non-profit organization and six from public relations agencies. The nine qualitative interviews were conducted with the CEO of a non-profit organization, the CEO of a PR agency, four directors of PR department in the private sector (two of them non-Kuwaitis) and three directors of government PR departments.

### Results and conclusions

This study confirmed that the four generic principles related to the strategic management of public relations were present in Kuwait. The roles of technician and press agent were found to be dominant in all the three types of organizations. However, it would appear that there is a slow momentum towards the demand for more specialised public relations practitioners who can draw up strategies for their organisations and justify the existence of public relations departments.

### Practical and social implications

The field of public relations in Kuwait continues to suffer a reputational problem, where it is generally assumed that anyone, even someone with no relevant knowledge or experience, can work in this domain. In order to help change this, it is necessary to hire specialised public relations practitioners with formal education in the field, who can emphasise and justify the value of public relations departments for the organisations concerned. Therefore, public relations education is key to the growth of the industry in Kuwait. The lack of talent in this area is a shared concern across almost all private and non-profit organisations.

This study demonstrates that a very small number of participants were members of, or associated with, public relations associations in Kuwait. Therefore, more public relations bodies are required to strengthen the relationship between practitioners and help enhance standards of practice. Moreover, the lack of research on public relations in Kuwait is another area that

requires attention from researchers, as academic research into public relations practice in this context could help define public relations more accurately and comprehensively, as well as identify the factors that influence it.

### Keywords

*Public relations; Strategic public relations management; Generic principles; Kuwait*

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# State of the art on internal communication: a multidisciplinary reality. A focus on strategy and the challenges ahead

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## Introduction and purpose of the study

Born at the intersection of an array of disciplines, including communication, sociology, management, human resources and marketing, internal communication is considered to have been present in the academic arena since the 70's (Welch, 2015) and it encompasses all forms of communication that happen at all levels of organizations. However, because of the atomistic doctrine followed in many academic studies, internal communication still hasn't been capable of affirming itself neither ontologically, nor epistemologically, which is reflected in the professional field, often marked by uncertainties and lack of definitions, that can lead to either siloed or encroached departments (Neil & Jiang, 2017). Considering the undeniable impact internal communication has on the overall performance of organizations, we aim to contribute to shedding light into the very own definition of internal communication, dissertate on the conceptual frameworks that compose it and unveil some of the main challenges ahead.

## Methodology

Departing from a communicational background, we integrate dispersed contributions from disciplines such as organizational communication, public relations, corporate communication and marketing communications, to the literature on internal communication. By embracing multidisciplinary as a reality, we propose a critic revision of the state of the art, placing our focus on aggregating current knowledge rather than applying a separatist perspective to the

topic.

## Results and conclusions

The significant role played by internal communication inside organizations is highlighted and supported by the showcase of studies that confirm the positive outcomes of effective internal communication practices in many different areas, such as employee trust, employee engagement and organizational reputation. The growing importance of internal communication encourages the pursuit of a strategized management, present both in the academic and professional contexts, and defended by scholars coming from different theoretical backgrounds. However, in light of recent investigations, strategic doesn't solely refer to a managerial view, on the contrary, the emphasis is now placed on the relationship with the employee, seen as an active communicator and the most important stakeholder of an organization (Kennan & Hazleton, 2006; de Bussy & Suprawan, 2012). In fact, concepts like "trust", "openness" and "feedback", when applied to the communicational interactions inside organizations, are positively associated with internal symmetrical communication (Grunig, 1992) which is seen by many as the most effective form of communication between upper management and the workforce.

## Practical and social implications

The empowered status of employees nowadays, together with the development and adoption of technologies inside increasingly complex organizations,



have a major impact on the appearance of new forms, new channels and even new players of internal communication. Both scholars and practitioners will need to keep adapting to a reality where: internal communication practices are not only managerial but dependent on the inputs of the employees, the ability to listen and collect feedback is sacred, and internal communication plans are expected to be strategically implemented and measured.

### Keywords

*internal communication; employee communication; strategic communication; strategy; multidisciplinary*

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# Securing social trust while facing foreign information influence

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## Introduction and purpose of the study

In the current media and communication environment hostile information influence may take many forms and root from various motives. Foreign information influence, spreading of disinformation and all matters related to that are seen as ways to influence and interfere in other society's functions. The means and purposes are considered hostile, and even though not necessarily a violation of international law, at least unethical behaviour and violation of good partnership. In order to address these threats, communication professionals are tackling with counterparts that are not acting according to ethical rules.

This paper scrutinizes how communication methods are utilized for building up reputation, trust and transparency in the context of multifaceted resilience building in order to counter hostile information influence. The research questions are:

- RQ1 How is communication used for building resilience towards information influence?
- RQ2 What are the ethical concerns of communication professionals in tackling the information influence (and how do they address them)?

## Literature review

The phenomenon called information influence has close connections to propaganda and information and psychological operations used in military contexts. Yet the phenomenon is difficult to define on conceptual level. Characteristic to information influence is that it has malignant motives and the actor behind the

influencing activities hides one's identity. In this paper foreign information influence is understood as activities performed by foreign state or a non-state actor to influence opinion building and decision-making that relates to national security, functionality of the community, fundamental values or other national interests (Pamment et al. 2018).

Resilience refers to ability to deal with stress and catastrophes, and recover effectively after crisis (Lindøe 2018). Resilience is constituted over time in communication and networks of individuals, organizations and societies (Buzzanell 2018). This study focuses on societal resilience, but since information influence attempts target societies through influencing individuals or organizations, societal resilience must be examined on all levels of resilience.

## Methodology

Following the meta-theoretical approach of grounded practical theory (Craig & Tracy 1995), this research aims to reconstruct the communicative practices of building resilience towards information influence. For this end, the communicative problems relating to the phenomenon, suitable tactics and strategies, and underlying values and principles are identified.

To understand what kind of communicative actions are needed for building resilience towards hostile information influence, **and what kind of ethical challenges communication professionals face related to this phenomenon**, two approaches are utilized. First, a wider understanding regarding the topic



is gained by in-depth interviews of six communication experts who counter information influence in their work. The interviews are analysed by thematic analysis.

Second, the phenomenon is scrutinized in practice through a case study focusing on communicative efforts taken against information influence, more specifically in the context of potential electoral interference. The research is conducted through analysing the communication campaign against information influence and disinformation in the context of Finnish parliamentary elections in spring 2019. The aim of the case study is to gain understanding on what kind of messages are used to raise awareness and address the phenomenon, and what is the public reaction on that in traditional and social media. The data will be collected by monitoring traditional media and social media forums.

### Results and conclusions

The interviewees emphasize that the grounds for social trust are built by long-term commitment to transparency and reliability of authorities, independent and professional media, and high-level education and media literacy of citizens. These factors enable society to bounce back and forward when hostile information influence attempts try to shake the foundations of social trust.

Although resilience is constituted over time, active communicative practices are needed during the information influence attacks. Findings of the case

study will demonstrate what kind of communicative efforts can and should be used to raise awareness about electoral interference and what kind of ethical aspects need to be considered.

It might be seen as a limitation of this research that the information influence was studied in a country that enjoys high levels of freedom of press, democracy, and citizens' education and media literacy, and thereby could be considered as easy environment to achieve resilience. However, the studied communication campaign is first of its kind and the lessons that can be learned from it are very topical as electoral interference have taken place in many countries during last couple of years. Nevertheless, it would be interesting to continue with comparative research in different societal surroundings.

### Practical and social implications

This research provides a useful set of best practices and ethical guidelines for communication professionals and others involved in countering information influence. It also points out that societal resilience is achieved through continuous cultivation and reconstruction of shared identity and ability to learn, and communication is an indispensable tool in this process.

### Keywords

*disinformation; electoral interference; ethics; information influence; resilience*

# Introducing the Strata Approach to Dialogue Analysis (SADA)

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## Introduction and purpose of the study

This study focuses on dialogue research arguing that it often misses the philosophical core idea of dialogue, focusing on the absence or presence of dialogic elements in various organizational settings. The objective of this theoretical paper is to introduce the Strata Approach to Dialogue Analysis (SADA), arguing that this approach allows a better understanding of dialogue theory in PR research, clarifying some gaps in the literature and exploring dialogue in a Gestalt manner.

## Literature review

This year marks thirty years of Pearson's (1989) important work, which introduced the principal idea that developing contact with audiences is the most *ethical* thing for public relations practitioners. Throughout these thirty years, there was extensive discussion about the nature and characteristics of dialogic relationships between organizations and various stakeholders. Within this debate, one cannot overstate the importance of the evolution of Kent and Taylor's (1998; 2002) ubiquitous dialogue theory, which for the last three decades has received a significant volume in public relations research. A considerable and clear apparent lack in dialogue research is the attempt to better understand *dialogue as an orientation*, whether existing or absent. Existing dialogue research commonly focuses on content analyzing online PR platforms, marking various dialogic components as "absent" or "present", hence referring to dialogue as a procedure or process instead of an orientation toward communication with others (Saxton & Waters, 2014; Sharp, 2001). The objective of this theoretical paper is to introduce the Strata Approach to Dialogue Analysis (SADA), arguing that this approach allows a better

understanding of dialogue theory in PR research, clarifying some gaps in the literature and exploring dialogue in a Gestalt manner.

## Discussion

We suggest to clearly distinct between three different layers of dialogic engagement analysis (*Features Analysis*, *Process Analysis* and *Orientation Analysis*), in order to gain a broader understanding of this key organizational component and to resolve contradictions and gaps in the literature (Figure 1). Each layer is an independent component of dialogue and engagement analysis, and an interrelated part of a broader approach.

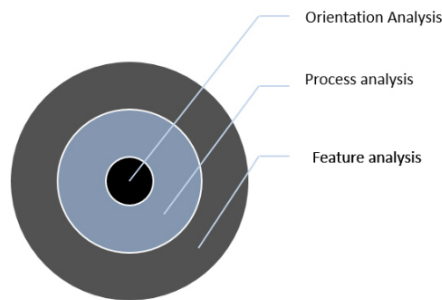
The first stratum, Features Analysis, uses content analysis to explore the dialogic elements incorporated in an organization's online platform as a *declaration of intentions* and as an invitation to initiate a dialogue between the organization and its publics. The second stratum of Process Analysis uses content analysis to explore the actual dialogue and engagement between organizations and their publics. The third stratum of SADA Analysis, Orientation Analysis, uses qualitative methods and refers to dialogue as an orientation and as a state of mind. Orientation Analysis aims to gain insights into the deeper layers of dialogue, asking questions such as how the organization's role are perceived by the senior managers of the organizations and what are the main motivations of the organizational elites for pursuing or avoiding engagement with publics. Each additional analytical layer contributes valuable information about the nature of the interactions between the explored organizations and their publics.



### Practical and social implications

The paper calls for the utilization of a Strata Approach for Dialogue Analysis (SADA) and establishes the need to use a more sophisticated instrumental tool that can break down dialogue analysis into different layers that are clearly interconnected – and also clearly distinguished. If scholars could more clearly identify to which layer or combinations of layers they were referring in their analyses, they could more clearly glean the significance of different research findings, as well as the conclusions derived from them. The Gestalt approach proposed herein can clarify certain gaps in the literature and disagreements among scholars that actually reflect different, unrecognized dialogue layers.

Figure 1: The Strata Approach for Dialogue Analysis



### Keywords

*SADA; dialogue; content analysis*

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# Public Response to Apologia in the Age of Social Media: An analysis of Dolce and Gabbana's Image Restoration after China Fiasco

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## Introduction and purpose of the study

On November 18, 2018, the Italian fashion powerhouse Dolce & Gabbana released a controversial video on China social media platform Weibo. The video, part of an ad campaign in preparation for the upcoming runway show in Shanghai scheduled for November 21, features an Asian-looking woman struggling to eat Italian foods like pasta, pizza, and cannoli with chopsticks. The video triggered instant outcry from the Chinese general public. Although they were taken down within 24 hours, the phrase "Boycott Dolce" has already been discussed over 18,000 times on Weibo (Pan, 2019). The criticism intensified when someone shared screenshots from co-founder Stefano Gabbana's Instagram account, including a message saying the videos were posted "by my will", and another message complaining "China Ignorant Dirty Smelling Mafia".

Amidst republic criticism, D&G was forced to postpone the show. The company tried to mitigate public criticism by announcing that D&G and Gabbana's Instagram accounts had been hacked, followed by a video with official apology made by the company's founders on November 23. The crisis continued to ferment, however, with more criticism focusing on the inadequacy and insincerity of D&G's response.

Benoit's (1995) image restoration theory offers a model to examine the strategies employed by organizations in response to reputation-damaging crises. In this study, we examine how the public respond to D&G's official response in the wake of the video controversy,

and argue that the effectiveness of these strategies is increasingly dependent on monitoring, understanding and predicting public responses to image response activities.

## Literature review

Benoit's (1995) image restoration theory offered one model for examining efforts to rebuild an organization's crisis-damaged reputation. This theory identifies a set of image restoration strategies appropriate for different types of crises to rebuild the damage a crisis inflicts on an organization's reputation. Benoit identified five image restoration strategies: denial; evasion of responsibility; reducing the offensiveness of the act; corrective action; and mortification.

While Benoit's theory focuses on the need to identifying the appropriate strategy to different type of crises, there is little discussion on the public response to the image repair strategies. In the case of D&G video controversy, public backlash seems to be fueled by the image restoration activities as much as the initial video. As social media allow for more immediate response loop from the public, there is need to examine how public responses to organizational image restoration activities may actually become part of the crises.

## Methodology

Data collection involves Twitter data mining using Python application designed for the study. We used #DolceGabbana as the initial search term, and limited

the search to Tweets posted between 11/18/2018 (when the video was posted) and 1/18/2019. Several other search terms including #DGTheGreatShow and #BoycottDolce were added later, until we believed that the data saturation point was reached. The final corpus includes all the tweets, retweets and the first-level comments made to them.

For data analysis, we employed an iterative analysis and a constant comparative method (Charmaz, 2006). This process started with a close reading of all the corpus, marking out snippets, paragraphs, and articulations that seemed relevant and/or interesting. Then, we proceeded to translate these “initial codes” to themes and subthemes.

### Results and conclusions

Our analysis reveals several themes emerging from the public response to image restoration strategies. The first theme “For the show” focuses on the perceived insincerity of the company communication post crisis. According to this theme, the announcement and apology issued by D&G are no more than lip service intended to muffle public anger, and does not reflect true remorse on the part of the company. Some posts point out that the insincerity was thinly veiled in the video, and that the Twitter account hacker attack explanation was too far-fetched to be believable.

The second theme “Unforgivable” is more specifically relevant to the mortification strategy, entailing that even when an apology is given, some transgressions are just too severe to forgive. Tweets in this category highlight the racist stereotyping and caricaturing of Chinese culture, many digging up historical document to show that the chopsticks video is not incidental, but a manifestation of deeper-trenched, systemic racism within the organization.

The third theme is “They are scared”. A more action-oriented line of discourse, this theme points out that D&G’s apology shows that it can be vulnerable to public sentiment. Therefore, it’s important to push the boycott further, making sure that the public anger does not deflate to empty threat.

### Practical and social implications

In this study, we examine how the public respond to D&G’s official response in the wake of the recent crisis. Our analysis reveals that the social media allow the public to respond publicly to D&G’s image repair activities at increasingly instant manner. The reaction to image repair activity can become part of the reputation-threatening crisis. For example, the public may perceive an apology as insincere, and provide proof that the organizational wrongdoing as more systemic and therefore more offensive. The effectiveness of the image repair strategies is increasingly dependent on monitoring, understanding and predicting public responses to them.

### Keywords

*Image Restoration Theory, Crisis Communication, China*

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# Do cobbler's kids believe in their future trade? PR students and the PR industry reputation

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## Introduction and purpose of the study

Even though public relations practitioners are supposed to earn trust for and build reputation of their clients, their occupation is often ridiculed or disdained by general public and media. Lack of a proper reputational work for the PR industry has become almost its staple, thus making PR people the proverbial cobbler's children.

On the other hand, a poor reputation of PR industry and practitioners is compensated by their decent salaries and promising career prospects in most developed countries. Due to high demand for PR services, studying PR has become trendy, which resulted in growing numbers of PR schools with masses of applicants. Still, PR universities supply new practitioners who are trained in reputation work for everyone but themselves and their prospective occupation.

## Research questions

Therefore, it is worthwhile to ask whether PR students are prepared by academics and practitioners to cope with their trade's poor reputation, and whether their careers are affected by a public perception of the PR field. Based on these assumptions the following research questions can be posed:

- RQ1 – How do PR students perceive the PR industry and what do they expect from their careers when they begin their education?
- RQ2 – Are the PR industry's reputational problems addressed in the PR schools' curricula at all (and how, if yes)?
- RQ3 – Are there any differences in opinions about the PR industry's reputation between first-year PR students and their older colleagues?

## Literature review

The negative connotations about the PR industry have been present since its inception and widespread in media featuring controversial practices, popular culture, and scholarly literature. In response, the PR industry, associations, trade media and academicians have been trying – unfortunately, without much success – to show the role and value of PR in a modern society, and its contribution to open debates on behalf of private and public institutions, industries and NGOs. No wonder that addressing the legitimacy of the PR function within organizations and its poor reputation is among the top concerns of the discipline.

Moreover, there is a major gap in perception of PR as a discipline between professionals and academics. Both parties, PR practitioners and educators alike, blame their peers – respectively – either for out of touch, esoteric and useless studies or for lack of understanding for scientific roots of practice. Calls for an ongoing dialogue among industry, practitioners and educators to develop a PR curriculum that is relevant to contemporary challenges and needs of clients have been consistently repeated in industry reports (cf. "Fast Forward") by eminent PR experts.

Their recommendations address many critical aspects of PR education, like the required courses, mix of theory and practice in PR curriculum, competencies of teachers (scholars and adjuncts), organizational, technological, cultural, and international issues relating to communication, yet they do not include suggestions on how PR students should handle criticism towards the PR field and how to hold it in high regard despite hostile environment. Therefore, PR students' opinions on their future occupation need to be examined further.

### Methodology

In order to better understand how PR students perceive reputational issues of their field, we are planning to conduct an online survey with two groups: first-year PR students, and the older ones. Respondents for the survey (at least 200 first-year and 200 older students) will be recruited by instructors at several universities teaching PR (at the request of this researcher).

The questionnaire will be internet-based, self-administered and short enough to complete it in 5-7 minutes. Before the quantitative research, we will conduct a series of interviews with PR students and educators to determine specific reputational industry issues to be measured.

### Results and conclusions

The research will find out whether PR students are aware that the PR industry faces major reputational problems and are willing (and prepared) to work on reputation on their profession, or whether they focus on technical aspects of serving their clients and employers.

It will also show whether both PR schools and industry

understand the need to work on their reputation (internally and among other groups), thus strengthening the social role, credibility and further growth of the PR industry.

### Practical and social implications

The research will shed a light on how to incrementally work on reputation of the PR industry, starting from education of future PR practitioners, who should be properly equipped to work for their own field. It is vital to clear misconceptions about PR, explain its role to opinion leaders and other key publics, improve its reputation, and eradicate harmful stereotypes about the PR industry and PR specialists.

### Keywords

*PR education, PR students, reputation, trust in PR*

### Literature

CPRE (Commission on Public Relations Education) (2018). Fast Forward: Foundations and Future State. Educators and Practitioners [<http://www.commissionpred.org/commission-reports/fast-forward-foundations-future-state-educators-practitioners>]



# Managing organisational hubris through purpose

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## Introduction and Purpose

This paper looks at the role of senior communicators in addressing organisational hubris. The paper argues the hubris hypothesis is well researched in management literature but less well understood from a communications perspective. By linking scholarship from both fields of study it is argued that as skilled influencers inside the organisation, communication professionals are best placed to identify symptoms of organisational hubris and mitigate its impact.

## Literature Review

Organisational hubris in management literature emphasises the cognitive bias affecting management decision making (Kahneman, Slovic and Tversky, 1982) with a focus on arrogance, self-esteem, overconfidence and risk taking. In addition to extreme certainty of being correct, another driver from psychology is the concept of pride and viewing oneself as more capable relative to others (Moore and Healy, 2008). Evidence suggests that CEOs and other senior executives exhibit hubris traits to a greater extent than others and this is evidenced by the review of the hubris literature by Picone, Dagnino and Mina (2014). They argue hubris has both a good and bad side arguing that managerial self-confidence positively influences firm performance but beyond a certain point it becomes damaging leading to organisational failure.

Scholarship points to a variety of ways to address hubris including governance structures. In the UK, the Daedulus Trust, a charity that exists to raise awareness of hubris, argues a pre-condition to managing the risks of the hubris syndrome is being aware of its existence and to watch for CEO and senior management symptoms. They argue individuals need to have 'toe

holders' - those who ensure they remain anchored in reality. This paper argues this is a role suited to the Director of Communications whose job it is to bring stakeholder views to the organisation. This concept of being the ethical guardian is not new in PR scholarship yet it is often difficult to make those suffering from the hubris syndrome listen to reason. By appealing to some of the fundamental hubris traits identified by Owen and Davidson (2009), it is argued PR practitioners could help redirect confidence and arrogance into social impact and purpose. These traits include seeing the world as an arena to exercise power and seek glory; a predisposition to take actions that seem likely to cast the individual in a good light; total self-confidence in delivering objectives; and finally a disproportionate concern with image and presentation.

Social impact and purpose has become increasingly topical in leadership and communication scholarship and practice. Ernst and Young (EY), management consultants, in their *Winning with Purpose* report (May 2016) argue organisational purpose galvanises people and is becoming increasingly important in defining business success with 87% of consumers believing companies perform best over time if their purpose goes beyond profit. EY define organisational purpose as "an aspirational reason for being which inspires and provides a call to action for an organisation and its partners and stakeholders" (2016:9). They argue purpose led companies have a clear reason for being - stakeholders know what they stand for and it contributes to getting and keeping the best talent, attracting and engaging customers and increases returns for shareholders. Here they point to Apple, Unilever and Hitachi.



## Methodology

This is a conceptual paper that synthesises hubris and communication scholarship and draws in a range of secondary sources. In so doing, it shows that defining and delivering purpose and social impact requires a long-term commitment that must resonate with organisational values and be humanistic. Not instinctively notions associated with hubris. Purpose, however, has to be activated by leadership behaviour and if this behaviour can be triggered by appealing not only to organisational success but also showing how it can add to the credibility and status of the individual then hubris can be potentially turned to good use.

## Implications and Contribution

This paper has theoretical and practical value. Picone, Dagnino and Mina (2014) call for the hubris hypothesis to be studied from a multidisciplinary perspective and this paper contributes to filling this gap. It also makes practical suggestions as to how communicators can recognise and tackle the hubris syndrome for wider organisational and societal benefit. The limitations are based on its conceptual nature and further qualitative and quantitative studies would be needed to test various constructs with organisations and communication professionals.

## Keywords

*Hubris, Purpose, Social Impact*

# Pitch imperfect: Power relations in the public relations pitching process

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## Introduction and purpose of the study

Public Relations (PR) agencies often win new work and contracts by responding to competitive tenders for new business. This can be in the form of a presentation to the potential client known as a 'pitch'. This can manifest itself as in a number of ways such as through a full competitive pitch where a number of agencies will present a strategic PR plan and examples of activity at the client's (or another) premises.

In international business, the tendering/purchasing process is an established and recognised area with its own guidelines, academic and practitioner literature and professional associations. It is often a formal and factual process and (dependent on the size of the contract) is usually run via a set of mutually understood protocols - although there are many exceptions. While these aspects may be present in PR work, PR pitches may not involve any purchasing professionals and are bound by few rules or agreed processes; there is often little or no transparency in the proceedings. Here intangibles such as 'relationship' and 'chemistry' become as important as the actual work/costings and can form the basis upon which the contract is awarded.

As a result, PR practitioners may put in many hours of unpaid work to create a presentation which stands little chance of success because (for instance) there may already be an incumbent agency or the brief may lack crucial information. The lack of transparency means that the weeks of work involved in the creation of a proposal may be wasted and the lack of any formal process means that feedback to the unsuccessful bidders can be scant.

## Literature review

While there are numerous professional articles in practice-based public relations publications on the pitching process, these are usually geared how PR agencies can improve the process (Feldman, 2017) and

how they can win competitive pitches. The issue of the human cost of pitches in terms of the time spent (and wasted) (Thomas, 2106) is rarely discussed, even in academic literature. Indeed, the main issue seems to be the 'theft' of pitch ideas from the losing agency.

In academic writing, it has previously been noted how little is written about day-to-day agency practice (Bridgen and Vercic, 2017, L'Etang, 2004) and correspondingly, the pitching process has received little academic attention, despite the fertile academic ground that it covers and the debates it generates in terms of ethical practice, professionalism, trust, and power relationships.

The pitching process has, however, been explored by Pieczka (2006) who points to the work by Smith who claimed that pitches can be won by 'chemistry' (Smith, 1996, in Pieczka, 2006).

## Methodology

This article explores the public relations pitching process from the perspective of agency-client power relationships through interviews with six regional public relations agencies.

## Results and conclusions

The study demonstrates that while many agency managers do 'take a stand' and request transparency and clarity from prospective clients this tends not to have a positive outcome for all but the 'top' agencies and can result in denial of the opportunity to pitch or a breakdown in client-agency relationships. Consequently, many agencies are happy to undercut prices or be complicit in inequitable (and potentially unethical) purchasing processes in the bid for business survival and the process does nothing to build trust between clients and agencies.

The article argues that while the pitching process exists in its current form, public relations can never



be treated as a strategic business process since the pitching process puts the business of public relations on an unequal footing with other business functions.

## Practical and social implications

This paper calls on professional bodies to introduce a voluntary code of conduct to the pitching process in order to prevent the exploitation of agencies and staff by clients. This could include areas such as:

- a limit to the number of agencies called for a pitch
- formal feedback cycle
- clarity on other agencies pitching
- full disclosure of conflicts of interest
- clarity on budget

Professional associations in the UK do not highlight the pitching process as an area of concern but as this paper argues, this may be because it demonstrates the weakness of the claims of the public relations industry to be seen as a serious strategic business practice

## Keywords

*Pitching, Agency Practice, Qualitative Public Relations; Power*

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# Changing How Reputation is Studied: From Outcomes to Process

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## Introduction and Purpose of Study

Trust and reputation are emergent properties based on activities or behavior of an organization. Focus is currently on measuring these variables as 'outcomes' with little attention placed on measuring the processes on which these outcomes are based. The notion of reputation and reputation management have characteristics of a class of problems called wicked problems (Rittel and Webber 1973). Wicked problems are resistant to long-lasting solutions, are hard to grasp and change when efforts are made to deal with them, and have complex roots and diverse stakeholders. There are no specific solutions to wicked problems like reputation, but it is possible to deal with them. One strategy for dealing with wicked problems is adopting a learning orientation that can engage the entire organization in thinking about them. This study investigates the relationship between the wicked problem of reputation performance and the firm's application of systems thinking, a critical feature of organizational learning.

## Literature Review

The decline of an organization's reputation and subsequently trust in that organization, strengthens the argument for changing the way reputation is studied. The internal breakdown of management control, the "wickedness" of the reputation problem and the need for a built-in approach (Brønn and Brønn 2015; Dowling 2016), illustrate the need for research employing a systems thinking approach to building reputation, with its stronger focus on process as opposed to outcome (Kraatz and Love, 2006).

This is because what occurs within an organization

that leads to it being perceived in certain ways is much more difficult to evaluate than gathering results from a reputation survey; it requires exploring reflective learning, a key learning skill associated with systems thinking. These skills are intuitive and easy to understand at the intellectual level, but are notoriously difficult to implement. This difficulty comes from the need to question and potentially change the fundamental perspective of understanding the world. This includes overcoming the ingrained habit of focusing on specific events and cultivating a habit of stepping back to look at patterns of events over time. This means moving from a reactionary thinking mode to a generative thinking mode. In the latter, decision makers attempt to develop endogenous or internal as opposed to externally-attributed explanations and solutions to the observed problematic behaviors. For example, looking inside for why reputation is declining, not blaming it on external causes.

The transition to systems thinking is also hampered by organizational and social cultures, both of which are strongly biased to considering only the short-term and relying on linear cause and effect processes. By definition, reputation building is a long-term process, making short-term thinking inappropriate.

Advancing the systems thinking approach to reputation, with its emphasis on process, requires research in two areas. First, exploring and evaluating the role of management in fostering a learning environment. Second, studying the overall learning orientation of the organizations, which is important because learning organizations are more effective in dealing with wicked problems. This also addresses the organization's culture for learning.



### Methodology

Based on the above, we hypothesize that there is a positive correlation between reputation rank and practicing the systems approach. The research will use the reputation ranking scores of the 50 firms listed on RepTrak's reputation ranking in Norway from 2018. Measurements of a systems approach will be based on the selected questions from the organizational learning inventory developed by DiBella et al. (1996), which measures two dimensions of organization learning: 1) the processes that support learning and 2) the culture within which learning is embedded. A number of statistical analyses will be carried out using spss. Surveys will be sent to the communication director of each firm.

### Practical and social implications

An assessment of managerial practices across functions and of organizational culture with respect to learning can identify opportunities for improving organizational learning capabilities, thereby supporting reputation management activities. For example, firms that score high on the RepTrak survey tend to score high on all of the seven drivers of reputation. It would be an important contribution to analyze these firms to see to what extent their learning characteristics are consistent with the challenges associated with managing their reputation. This research would help organizations to understand the basis of their particular reputation and provide specific guidance on how to manage their

behavior more effectively and, consequently, its impact on their reputations. These insights would be invaluable not only for the private sector, but for all organizations, and even countries.

### Keywords

*reputation, systems approach, learning orientation*

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# Establishing trust to enhance reputation in culturally diverse healthcare organisations

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## Introduction and purpose

Members of society are heavily reliant on quality health services, which are central to overall wellbeing and health. The quality of healthcare services is directly influenced by the competence of health professionals and also the service values that underpin the reputation and accountability to the public for reliable and appropriate healthcare. However, in turn, healthcare organisations are also dependent upon their reputation as quality employers in order to attract an international workforce. Reputation-building tactics are being used by a rising number of companies to make themselves more attractive to prospective and current employees (Fombrun and van Riel, 2004). For example, Magnet Hospitals in the USA are recognised as having reputations that attract and retain quality healthcare professionals.

## Research goal

The purpose of this research was to examine the perceptions of migrant (and host nurses) of the communication and practice they experienced in a number of increasingly diverse healthcare organisations in New Zealand (NZ).

## Literature review

Nurses are on the move. They have always been a mobile population and most countries have culturally diverse workplaces. However, the momentum has increased in the past decade, to the point where 50% of all new registrations for registered nurses (RNs) in NZ were granted to internationally qualified nurses (IQNs). The Nursing Council of NZ relies on IQNs to

fill 25% of all nursing positions, and 46% of medical practitioners working in NZ qualified overseas. In both groups, NZ has the highest percentage in the OECD. Internationally, countries are heavily reliant on healthcare professionals who have qualified elsewhere, and it is currently a competitive market. Recruitment, though, is only half of the story. Retention is equally important. Reputation is founded on words and deeds. Although a number of migrant professionals may be attracted to work offerings, there is also a high attrition rate, which is also costly.

## Methodology

The research was undertaken over 3 years as a 2-phase mixed-method design. Phase 1 comprised interviews with 53 Registered Nurses (RNs), and the qualitative data was thematically analysed and used to inform the development of a national, quantitative/qualitative online questionnaire. Some 259 RN respondents completed the questionnaire survey.

## Results and conclusions

The perceptions of their experience of the workplace from migrant nurses was concerning on a number of levels. Migrant nurses had encountered enormous financial, family and professional costs to migrate to NZ, and they had to contend with an environment that was unsettling and rife with what they perceived to be breaches of trust, which subsequently brought the reputation of the health service into question. Similarly, host nurses also struggled with foreign language and disparate attitudes to hierarchy.

### Limitations

Although this study is limited to one country, there is considerable literature that attests to this outcome in other countries. For example, a comparative study that was undertaken in a Middle East context confirmed the experience of migrant nurses as one heavily reliant on the support of infrastructure and colleagues to ensure an enduring transition.

### Future directions

Reputation is based on visibility, but it also relates to how individuals evaluate the information they have. However, this process is situated within varying cultural worldviews. Future research of the experience of host and migrant nurses in other countries would help to discover unique and contrasting experience for RNs working as IQNs.

### Practical and social implications

As reputation is very much in the eye of the beholder, it makes the concept largely perceptual and informational (de Quevedo-Puente, de la Fuente-Sabaté & Delgado-García, 2007). Thus, the possibility of reputation management externally and also relationship management internally provides potential benefit to healthcare organisations, though there has been little exploration to date in the PR literature. This highlights a need for new consideration, particularly in this area of public relations.

This matters because, healthcare is not an optional service and there are supply and demand pressures that means that providing services will rely on attracting quality migrant staff. Most likely, all of us will depend on medical assistance at some time in our lives, increasingly so in the context of the aging of the baby boom cohort. Populations require exponentially increasing access to healthcare services as they age. At the same time, that cohort is leaving the health sector in large numbers, and there is a heavy reliance on IQNs to fill gaps. However, that same reliance is shared internationally, so making the sector more attractive through a positive reputation to prospective employees is key to a sustainable healthcare service.

### Keywords

Reputation; Healthcare professionals; Intercultural communication

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# Managing Trust and Reputation in Times of Crisis. Case Study: Croatia Airlines

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## Introduction and purpose of the study

Reputation is the most valuable intangible asset an organization owns. It strengthens the link between company and its stakeholders and enhances the trust. The loss of reputation reduces the respectability and credibility of an organization, especially in times of crisis. When crisis happens company must directly respond to it. An effective crisis communication can limit consequences arising from it. In July 2018, during the summer time of the year when Croatia Airlines, the state owned flag carrier of Croatia, transports the largest number of passenger, Croatia Airlines labour union (ORCA), threatened to hold a strike. The strike would call into question regular flights, affect more than 7.600 passengers per day and cause tremendous financial losses of 800.000 EUR per day. In August 2018 the competent court (Zagreb County Court) prohibited the strike stating that ORCA did not negotiate in good faith. During the crisis period, Croatia Airlines and ORCA used different negotiation tactics to solve the conflict. When conflicts and crises happen media begin to examine who is to blame. The separate and conflicting interest come in the centre of media attention. Crisis communicators therefore have to update media as well as all the other stakeholders constantly regarding any measures being taken. The purpose of this study is to analyse and describe the crisis communication strategy and negotiation tactics that Croatia airlines used during the crisis in order to preserve the trust and reputation among its stakeholders as well as to define which frames dominated in the media articles during that period.

## Literature review

Crisis management is the most common practice for dealing with crises in organizations. Fearn-Banks (2001) defines crisis management as a strategic planning to prevent and respond during a crisis or negative occurrence, a process that removes some of the risk and uncertainty and allows the organization to be in greater control of its destiny. Since key goals in the crisis management process are to prevent or minimize damage, maintain organization's operations and repair reputational damage, clear communication is essential for each of them (Coombs, 2007). Crisis communication is defined as the dialog between the organization and its publics prior to, during and after the negative occurrence (Fearn-Banks, 2002). Crises can arise from the conflict between organization and its stakeholders. According to the excellence model of public relations and its mixed-motives model (J. Grunig, 1992), each party in the conflict retains a strong sense of its own self-interests yet each is motivated to cooperate in a limited fashion to attain at least some resolution of the conflict (Murphy, 1991) using between different negotiation tactics – contention, avoidance, principled, cooperation, unconditional, win/win or ND, accommodation, compromise and mediated. Hence, it is no strange that asymmetrical tactics are sometimes used to gain the best position for organization within the desirable, win/win zone (Dozier et al., 1995). Since trust enables an organization to exist (J. Grunig, 1992) and is positively correlated with the reputation of an organization, it is of utmost importance for public relations practitioners to manage positive relationships between organizations and their key publics based on trust during the crisis period.



### Methodology

A case study approach was used to analyse and describe the crisis communication strategy and negotiation tactics that Croatia Airlines used during the crisis and to define which frames dominated in the media articles during the crisis period. It comprises of two data collection methods – analysis of Croatia Airlines crisis communication strategy using the official documents (internal letters, press releases, crisis communication plan etc.) and content analysis of media articles.

### Results and conclusions

Effective crisis communication will help organization facing with crisis to maintain its reputation and prevent the loss of trust. Since media coverage of an organization's activities during the crisis can have a large effect on the perception and attitude of stakeholders, it is of utmost importance for crisis communication managers to proactively and consistently communicate

with media and update it regarding any measures being taken. When stakeholders receive more information about the crisis, they perceive it less serious. Therefore, the constant flow of information must be employed toward both, internal and external stakeholders.

### Practical and social implication

The case study can serve as an example to the public relations practitioners how to develop effective crisis communication strategy and employ negotiation tactics during the crises in the airline industry. Communicating consistently and proactively with all stakeholders (internal and external) during the crisis is the most important part of upholding an organization's legitimacy and reputation.

### Keywords

*crisis communication, trust, reputation, airline industry, Croatia Airlines*

# Combating Fake News about Companies on Social Media: The Effects of Self-Efficacy, Media Trust, and Persuasion Knowledge on Company Trust

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## Introduction and Purpose of Study

The prevalence of social media has provided ease for organizations and stakeholders to communicate. However, the flip side of the coin is the wide spread of fake news on social media. The danger of fake news has compelled scholars to analyze its transmission process, yet relatively few has investigated fake news in the context of communication management, where reputational damage from fake news spread is staggering (Reber et al., 2018).

To address this concern, this study focuses on a specific stakeholder—consumers, and draws theoretical insights from the Persuasion Knowledge Model, a theory that explains consumers' coping mechanism when exposed to messages (Friestad & Wright, 1994). We propose a model (Figure 1) that maps out the antecedents, process, and consequences when consumers are exposed to fake news (*in the form of fabricated negative information*) about companies on Facebook. The model delineates the role persuasion knowledge plays in fake news' impact on consumers' company trust. It incorporates how self-efficacy on identifying fake news and media trust influence consumers' persuasion knowledge of the fake news, and how persuasion knowledge impacts perceived diagnosticity of the fake news and company trust.

## Literature Review

Persuasion knowledge refers to the knowledge consumers have about various issues and their own coping goals and mechanisms. Following previous studies, this study operationalizes persuasion knowledge as inference of manipulative intent and skepticism toward the fake news in a Facebook post.

**Antecedents.** *Self-efficacy* would impact the ability to activate consumers' persuasion knowledge by self-recognizing the persuasive nature of messages. Therefore, higher level of self-efficacy could help activate a higher level of persuasion knowledge about the fake news (**H1**). In addition, research shows that when consumers retain a low level of **trust toward a certain media outlet**, their persuasion knowledge of message distributed via that outlet tends to increase (**H2**).

**Consequences.** *Information diagnosticity* (i.e., relevance and usefulness) is an outcome after message exposure and process between exposure and consumers' subsequent responses. Thus, we expect a direct effect from persuasion knowledge on perceived diagnosticity of the fake news (**H3**), and an indirect effect from self-efficacy on diagnosticity via persuasion knowledge (**H4**). Furthermore, if consumers have high persuasion knowledge and thus suspect this news as fake, their **trust toward the company** itself would increase (**H5a**). On the other hand, the more diagnostic



they perceive the fake news, the less trust they will have toward the company (**H5b**). Finally, when consumers possess a high level of self-efficacy, they tend to have sufficient amount of persuasion knowledge of the negative company information in the fake news that prevents them from losing company trust (**H6**).

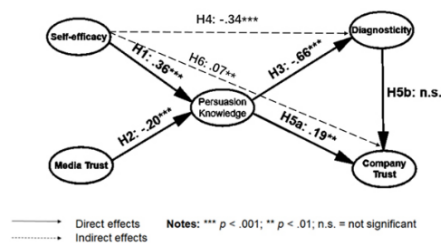
### Methodology

Contextualized in the fake news spread about Coca-Cola's recall of Dasani water in 2016, an online survey was conducted via Qualtrics with 468 adults in the United States.

### Results and Conclusions

Data were analyzed using structural equation modeling, yielding satisfactory data-model fit. Results (see Figure 1) showed that self-efficacy (+) and media trust (-) significantly predicted consumers' persuasion knowledge of the fake news. Persuasion knowledge of the fake news significantly influenced consumers' perceived diagnosticity (-) of the fake news and subsequent company trust (+). Furthermore, persuasion knowledge of the fake news mediated the effects from self-efficacy on perceived diagnosticity of the fake news (-) and company trust (+), respectively.

Figure 1: Conceptual model, hypotheses, and path results



### Practical and Social Implications

Findings provide several practical and social implications. First, results suggest that consumers' persuasion knowledge is key in determining whether the fake news could influence their attitudes toward the company. Thus, communication managers could pinpoint certain cues of the fake news when releasing real information to combat the potential reputational damage. Second, it is important to cultivate consumers' self-efficacy to reduce their susceptibility of the fake news, thereby reducing its impact on company trust. Consumers' self-efficacy of identifying fake news may be cultivated via media literacy education, so companies may invest in corporate social responsibility initiatives that aim at educating publics' media literacy. Third, communication managers may provide information of or emphasize on the trustworthiness of specific media outlets so that consumers may make their own judgment. Moreover, when companies try to communicate the truth after fake news takes place, communication managers would need to weigh in the trustworthiness and credibility of each media outlet so as to choose the appropriate channel of communication.

### Keywords

Social media, Fake news, Trust, Persuasion knowledge, Self-efficacy

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# The autocracy of Truth. Knowledge as a prerequisite of trust and dialogue

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## Introduction and purpose of the study

Notions of truth and knowledge have reclaimed the interest of academic field at least since Donald Trump's advisor Kellyanne Conway first used the expression 'alternative facts' and inspired popular discourse to contest the traditional notion of a lie. Subsequent scandalous manipulations made by companies like Cambridge Analytica confirmed the shift in attitudes towards what had been considered objectively truthful but now is subject to democratic, popular vote. Various authors have since attempted to provide explanations of the decreasing trust in experts, the value of academic achievement, and disregard for objective knowledge (e.g. Nichols, 2016; Sloman, 2017; Sunstein, 2017).

The goal of this paper is to provide evidence of explanatory power stemming from using a psychological, micro-level repertoire of tools for understanding the mechanism of knowledge formation.

## Literature review

Bentele and Seidenglanz (2008) notice that today's societies, based on knowledge and information, became more dependent on the non-immediately verifiable facts, and the role of trust and credibility defined as a prerequisite for effective communication. PR agents often initiate the exchange of information between various parties (publics, organisations, stakeholders), a process which is subsequently mediated by journalists and influencers. According to Edwards and Hodges (2011), the production of discourse is fundamental to public relations, as it is a means by which 'truth' is communicated (Mackey, 2011). Knowledge has been also conceptually used to separate Public Relations from propaganda as demonstrated in a critical review by L'Etang (2008). It is said that Public Relations produce and regulate meaning through knowledge (Hodges, 2006). From a societal perspective, knowledge, opinion

and values can be also considered building blocks of culture (Smajcs, 2006). However, typically both terms (knowledge and truth) are utilised to build predictions on a mezzo and macro - rather than micro - levels of analysis, typical for sociological approaches.

Edwards demonstrates the interdisciplinary character of the field of Public Relations and shows that it is inherently multi-paradigmatic. She also warns about the dangers stemming from the dominance of one paradigm (2012). One of the perspectives only occasionally visited by PR scholars is psychological social psychology. It has been almost thirty years since Morgan and Swchalbe (1990) noticed that the distance between sociological and psychological social psychology had decreased and presented specific benefits of incorporating social cognitive perspective into sociological social psychology discourse. Authors argued that lack of communication between two fields led to neglecting contributions of the cognitive revolution, which for social psychology could be translated into better understanding how mind and information processing affect human behaviour in its social contexts.

From a social psychological perspective, knowledge formation processes have been said to be inherent in every act of human behaviour. Although secular in nature, people need the knowledge to be able to face and solve various tasks encountered in everyday life. The knowledge formation process as interpreted by Kruglanski (1989) explains an abundance of phenomena on an individual (e.g. the use of heuristics in decision making, goal planning and attainment, stereotype formation and loyalty towards brands), group (fake news sharing, collective narcissism, choice of group leaders) and societal level (tolerance towards immigrants, preference for authoritarian leaders).

As demonstrated elsewhere, micro (individual) level

of analysis in Public Relations has been proposed to explain how PR and PR professionals can contribute to building effective relationships with stakeholders based on contextually relevant social knowledge.

## Methodology

Given the mix of frequently consistent approaches to knowledge and truth in the rich body of Public Relations theorising and their role in Public Relations, it was interesting to examine, how in practice the knowledge formation facilitation idea is executed by PR professionals. This goal has been designed for two steps.

In the first, media content analysis was used to determine different practices of spreading news and their accuracy by the media depending on different outlets. Secondly, an experimental method was employed to test how participants - PR professionals and journalists would evaluate the truthfulness (DV1) and the likelihood of sharing (DV2) press releases containing a different version of fictitious stories differing in a level of clarity, detail and objective

truthfulness (IV1). Implicatures, presuppositions and contradictions were used to manipulate different levels of consistency between original stories and press releases. Additionally, different media outlets were presented depending on the experimental condition (IV2).

## Results and Implications

Results revealed participated lower than expected ability to distinguish truthful and non-truthful messages and higher than expected proneness to disseminate inaccurate stories. Implications for education and practice, including training of professional development of chartered practitioners are offered. Concluding remarks stress the need to emphasis responsibility for truthfulness and the value of knowledge as factor that needs to be included in higher (mezzo and macro) level Public Relations theorising.

## Keywords

*Knowledge, Truth, Trust, Psychology*

# Trust me: its Complicated

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## Introduction and purpose of the study

The communication profession is characterized by new demands and an increasingly complex environment (Coebergh, 2011). The introduction of tasks is at high speed, and the number of tasks for professionals make him or her look like a Centipede (Elving, Van Ruler, Goodman & Genest, 2012). This study researches how the increasingly complex environment influences the work of a communication professional, someone who is paid to deliver services and products in managing communication (Coebergh, 2015).

## Literature review

Applying the classical Shannon and Weaver (1964) mathematical model of communication, complexity is considered as noise that violates the accuracy, precision and effectivity. Information overload can be a result of complexity (Otondo, et al., 2008) by communicating too much cues, since a wide range of cues may increase information overload, especially when information is unfamiliar, complex, or is presented more rapidly than the receiver can process. The profession of communication management is faced with increasing noise, or complexity, whereas especially the increase of channels and media increase the feelings of information overload. For instance, a press release is not only sent to the media, but also has to be posted on internal media, on the website and on relevant social media as well.

A proxy of complexity is the number of Sources, Messages, Channels and Receivers, that can be analyzed in the classic SMCR-model (Berlo, 1960). The central question of this study is how and how many times communication professionals have to consider

aligning Sources, Messages, Channels and Receivers in their professional work. Though this seems to be an open end question, complexity arises exponentially when the number of Sources, Messages, Channels and Receivers are increasing.

## Methodology

In a recently started and ongoing study among Dutch communication professionals, aimed at having better information on the profession and recent developments in the profession, we tested to what extent presumed communication professionals are actually aligning what Messages, on behalf of their Sources, are deliberately put in certain Channels to reach particular Receivers. We estimate that about 4.000 presumed communication professionals viewed the online invitation for filling in our questionnaire that we distributed through the channels of Logeion, the Dutch professional body for communication professionals, as well as other online media. Finally, a series of questionnaires was realized by graduate students of the University of applied science Leiden who were targeted to find communication professionals in particular industries. Currently we have 340 completed questionnaires of communication professionals, having a tenure of about 10.3 years. The respondents indicate that 37% work for small companies (< 50), 22% for companies between 50 and 500 people, 28% for large companies with between 500 and 10,000 employees and finally 13% of our respondents work for large companies (more than 10,000 employees).

## Results and conclusions

An indication of the complexity of the work done on a daily basis is that 22% indicate that they are dealing with huge groups of Sources and 30% indicate that they are dealing with huge number of different Messages. Also, another 38% state they are dealing with large group of Receivers. Only 14% indicate that they have to deal with many different media (Channels).

One finding of this study is that the complexity for the work of communication professionals can be measured by the number of Sources, Messages, Channels and Receivers. Qualitative answers in the questionnaire, as well as results of a range of boardroom interviews, indicated that increased complexity in aligning SMCR is indeed defining the character and work of a communication professional.

## Practical and social implications

A communication professional typically has to define on a daily basis to process the information received from Sources, define the optimal wording and imaging of Messages, finding the best fit between the Message and the available Channels and to make sure Receivers are informed, maybe even influenced correctly. With increasing distrust in institutions, the complexity of the communication professional cannot be better illustrated than this. In the paper we will discuss

complexity and relate complexity to the main themes of the conference: trust and reputation.

## Keywords

*communication professional, complexity, environment, tasks*

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# Reputation, status and more – the role of PR degrees in perceiving public relations as a profession

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## Introduction and purpose of the study

This study sought to understand the relationship between university education and professionalism in the public relations industry and its subsequent reputation and status.

This study was a key focus of a broader research project, the first national study that sought to provide a snapshot of public relations education in Australia, based on the perspectives of those who design and deliver Australian PR courses.

## Literature review

Public relations degrees in Australia emerged in the 1970s, building on the establishment of diplomas and certificates that already existed in some parts of the country (Morath 2008, pp. 52-53, Xavier 2012, Gleeson 2014). This period was “the early model (of PR education) in which tertiary courses were confined to teaching-focused institutions and conducted largely by teacher-practitioners” (Hatherell and Bartlett 2005) and offered in Arts or Communication faculties in “vocationally-oriented second tier institutions” (Fitch 2014, p. 623).

Given this history of Australian PR degrees developing from vocational public relations programs, the ongoing ‘practice-theory debate’ in universities, described by Macnamara as “industry pressure for ‘work-ready’ vocationally-orientated graduates” (Macnamara 2012, p. 10), and the changes to the post-Bradley Australian tertiary landscape that see universities increasingly focused on ‘graduate employment outcomes’ (Bradley et al 2008), identifying the ideals and thinking that shape Australian PR degrees was required.

Further, referring to the status of what she describes as the ‘occupation’ of PR in the United Kingdom,

L’Etang states that “it seems unlikely that PR will ever achieve full professional status” (L’Etang 2003, p. 43). She believes that in the UK the Institute for Public Relations (IPR) has failed to establish clear jurisdiction (control of occupational boundaries), a cognitive base or social legitimacy (acceptance of its social role and acknowledgement of standards of ethical practice) and public relations in the UK cannot as a result claim professional status.

L’Etang’s link between a ‘cognitive base’, theoretically provided by formal university education, and ‘social legitimacy’ or reputation and status was also explored in this Australian study. This study sought to determine the extent to which Australian PR educators agreed with scholars who already consider public relations to be a profession (Toth and Aldoory 2010), or “close enough” (Kruckeberg 1998) or who don’t believe education is a major factor or even a requirement of professionalism (de Bussy and Wolf 2009, p. 377). It examined how the perspectives of Australian PR educators shaped how PR degrees are designed and taught and the impact those decisions have on the reputation and status of public relations as an academic discipline and as a practice.

## Methodology

The data for this part of the study was gathered by the researcher conducting 45 mostly face-to-face semi-structured interviews with Australian higher education-sector (HE) public relations educators from 19 universities around Australia. Data was also gleaned from personal observations made by the researcher during the conduct of those interviews.

This approach was selected to enable the gathering of ‘descriptive research’ (Kreuger and Neuman 2006), based in each participant’s ‘social world’ (Herzog in Gubrium et al, 2012), with a view to revealing new data



that contributes to an understanding of how Australian HE public relations educators grapple with ideas around the purpose of their work and the way they conduct it and the resultant impact of those thoughts and practices on perceptions of the reputation and status of public relations.

### Results and conclusions

This study concludes that a small minority of PR educators already consider that public relations is a profession (13% of respondents). Of those who do not, the following four themes emerged:

- Education will shape PR as it becomes a profession
- Education will provide the ethical framework and theoretical basis required for PR to become a profession
- Education will provide the graduates that a profession requires
- Education will help to improve the reputation and status of public relations.

The reputation and status of public relations as a practice was linked by many to the 'major issue' of its low status and positioning as a discipline at universities. Public relations as an academic discipline was described as 'marginalised', 'in danger of becoming a ghetto in academia' with 'no academic home'. A lack of original discipline-specific research and too few PhD-qualified lecturers were thought to contribute to these reputation issues.

### Practical and social implications

The study reveals that if the status of public relations as an academic discipline does not improve it will be to the detriment of the ongoing attempts to professionalise public relations and to ensure it is practiced ethically.

### Keywords

*public relations, public relations education, Australian public relations praxis, higher education, public relations profession*

# Organizational and individual reputations: Linking reputation and relationship management in the sharing economy

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## Introduction and Purpose

Although there are various definitions of organizational reputation, most definitions agree that reputation resides in the perceptions of publics and is formed through material and symbolic interactions with the organization, based on previous behaviors as well as estimates of future behaviors (Ponzi, Fombrun, & Gardberg, 2011; Vercic, et al., 2016). Antecedents of organizational reputation include organizational signals relating to quality of products and services, personal experiences of publics with products and services, certifications from institutional intermediaries such as media rankings, certifications of achievement, recommendations of opinion leaders, or word-of-mouth communication (Rindova et al., 2005). One of these inputs could be publicly available consumer ratings, which could feed into metrics and indices of organizational reputation.

The rapid spread of digital networks and their related affordances have led to the creation of what has been called the sharing economy, or the peer economy, based on the idea of collaborative consumption wherein owners/service providers rent out their possessions such as a car or a house to individuals. Such companies, such as Airbnb and Uber, usually employ rating or review systems that assess both the interactants – the renter and the tenant; the driver and the passenger – to enable commercial transactions based mostly on trust and online reputation.

Unlike most studies on organizational reputation, which examines how organizations can manage their reputations, in the sharing economy, service providers rate customers, thus impacting the online and shareable reputation indices of individual customers.

With organizations being able to rate customers, now individuals can also have their own reputation indices that is shared online to inform other service providers. See the Netflix show "Instant Hotel"<sup>1</sup> to see the shocked look on participants' faces when they are informed that their peer hotel owners will rate them as customers as well. It is no longer a one way street where only customers get to rate providers, feeding into their reputations. However, although the sharing economy, predicted to generate global revenues of \$335 billion by 2025, is highly dependent on trust, built upon publicly available metrics of reputations of providers and customers, there is scarce research on trust and organizational and individual online reputations, especially within the field of public relations, where both trust and reputation are core constructs of study.

What does the creation of organizational and individual reputation scores mean for managing trust and relationships between organizations and their publics? Can these new forms of online reputation management unshackle relationship building between organizations and their publics from their organization-centeredness and make it a truly mutual process? What are some of the strategies employed by providers and users to manage their reputations in the sharing economy? This study aims to explore the ramifications of reputation management in the sharing economy and examine their implications for managing relationships between publics and organizations.

## Literature review

This study is situated within literatures on reputation management drawn from public relations, marketing and management and will examine definitions of reputation, its <sup>1</sup> Instant Hotel is a Netflix show where

teams of Australian homeowners compete for the title of best Instant Hotel by staying overnight in each other's rentals and rating their experience (<https://www.netflix.com/aeen/title/81023011>).

Antecedents and consequences, and review studies on reputation management within digital spaces, particularly studies on trust and reputation in the sharing economy (Ert, Fleischer, & Magen, 2016; Ponzi, Fombrun, & Gardberg, 2011; Rindova et al., 2005; Vercic, et al., 2016). It will also review the body of knowledge on relationship management within public relations literature (Hon & Grunig, 1999) and draw out linkages between reputation and relationship management.

### Methodology

Reflecting the exploratory nature of the questions posed to guide this research, the study will employ a qualitative research strategy and in-depth interviews as the method of research. Semi-structured, in-depth interviews will be conducted with participants in the sharing economy, both service providers (individuals and related organizations) and users associated with organizations such as Airbnb, Uber and Careem, based in the United Arab Emirates. The number of interviews will be determined based on attaining theoretical saturation. An interview guide will be created, tested and modified prior to employing it in the final set of interviews. All the data will be recorded and transcribed and analysed thematically, using manual analytic strategies.

### Practical and Social Implications

The findings of this study will enhance understanding of reputation management in the sharing economy. This could have numerous implications for both service providers and users as they deal with strategies to manage their online reputations. This can have important implications for trust levels in society as digital networks expand and the sharing economy takes off, through collaborative peer-to-peer commerce among strangers.

### Keywords

*Reputation; Relationship Management; Sharing economy*

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# A Most Heroic Effort ... in a Most Unique Political Climate. Capitol Hill's Press Secretaries' Attempts to Enhance and to Protect the Reputations of Members of the United States Congress

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## Introduction and Purpose of the Study/Research Question

Recognizing virtually every Member of the United States House of Representatives or Senate employs an individual serving as press secretary—who is dedicated to meticulously crafting and delivering that politician's image—the paper addresses the research question, “What are the processes, motivations, and potential influences of Capitol Hill's press secretaries when it comes to shaping reputations of Members of the United States Congress?”

## Literature Review

A kaleidoscope overview of what others have written that speaks to the press secretaries' worlds—particularly as those worlds relate to building trust in the Members of Congress they serve—is provided. It begins summarizing the *only three published studies, totaling fewer than 80 pages*, in which Congress' press secretaries have served as units of analysis (Downes, 2008; Hess 1991; Cook, 1989). Next it references 27 other analyses that speak—albeit nearly always indirectly—to the press secretaries' work. These include contributions on the topic of reputation management in government such as Waeraas and Maor's *Organizational Reputation in the Public Sector* (2014).

Insights from the political communication literature follow; chief among these are those from Graber's

“Media Power in Politics” series (1984-2011). Next a brief overview of the evolution of Congressional communication processes is provided. It begins over four decades ago citing Hesse's “Strategies of the Political Communication Process” (1976) in which the author predicted the symbiotic relationship between Congressional communicators and reporters would grow increasingly sophisticated. The review concludes discussing social media's impact today on Capitol Hill's communications referencing, among others, Hayden's *Congressional Communication in the Digital Age* (2018).

## Methodology

The paper next shares insights gained from 12 data gathering/analysis procedures. These were carried out between 1994 (as “reputation” was becoming an engrained catchphrase in public relations practice and research) and 2018. For each, current or former press secretaries served as units of analysis; inquires explored in one commonly built on those addressed in the previous one/s. In turn, a research stream unraveling the phenomenon of the Congressional press secretary developed. The first procedure, initiated some 25 years ago, was a series of unstructured, wide-ranging, telephone interviews. Two surveys, a focus group, ethnographic analyses, and dozens of interviews (ranging from semi-structured to structured) followed up through 2018. Findings that speak to reputation management— informed by developments in the literature and chosen from within the aforementioned

research stream—are the foci of this paper.

## Results and Conclusions

The paper shares six sets of findings. These provide insights into Congress' press secretaries:

- 1. *roles*—particularly as those roles relate to building trust in the Members of Congress to whom they offer unequivocal support, and whose reputations they vigorously protect;
- 2. *types*—ranging from the “young-and-new” responsible for working primarily with traditional reporters, to the “mature-and-seasoned” intricately involved with strategic communications decisions increasingly informed today by computer-based analytical tools;
- 4. *environments*—noting Capitol Hill is “an environment unique in all the world” and thus provides distinctive workplace experiences for public relations/communication management professionals working in it;
- 5. *tasks*—particularly those commonly related to public/media relations practices such as drafting news releases, compiling daily “clips,” and designing strategic communications plans, each hoping to enhance trust in a Member of Congress; and
- 6. *challenges and opportunities related to public/media relations in a new/social/digital/emerging media environment*—in which the press secretaries use of these media to: (1) gauge the reputations of their

bosses, (2) separate those bosses from negatives associated with the institution of Congress (currently with approval ratings of about 16%), and (3) handle crises.

The paper's *limitations* are noted next. Among them is the dearth of literature from which to draw when studying Congressional press secretaries. Recommendations for *future studies* follow. Here academics et al. are encouraged use the insights the paper offers—particularly those related to enhancing reputations of, and trust in, Members of Congress—as a foundation on which to build a body of knowledge about this understudied group of potentially powerful communication managers. The paper then suggests that “amid ‘fake news,’ an unruly world of cyberspace, and a current United States president with a communication style unlike any before, an understanding of the press secretaries’ roles as reputation managers is, today, more important than any time in history.”

## Practical and Social Implications

The paper concludes asking if the press secretaries’ work as unabashed advocates promoting Members of Congress is good for the United States democracy. In turn it proposes that if press secretaries and reporters do their jobs well, messages shared with the citizenry have verity, the nation is well served, and democracy’s best outcomes are enhanced.

## Keywords

*congressional communications; press secretary; reputation management*

# Evaluating and Measuring Stakeholder Trust: Key to Achieving Business and Communication Objectives

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## Introduction

Trust is the most critical asset an organization has. The question every customer asks, whether it is a manufacturing, financial services, professional services or retail is, "who can I trust?" We are in an era of the empowered customer. Customers are more skeptical and more critical than ever before. They are demanding more transparency and integrity. No longer is it good enough to have the best product or the best service. To grow and succeed companies must have the trust of their customers and stakeholders.

Almost every organization talks about how important trust is to their organizations, yet most of them do not have a proactive plan to build and protect it. Customer and stakeholder trust is rarely measured as a key performance indicator. Organizations that do have a competitive advantage. Many leaders find it difficult to quantify its value to the success of their organizations... until there's a crisis. No organization is immune. This rings true when looking at recent examples of compromised trust that have played out in the global media – think Tesco, United Airlines, BP and Facebook. If data and privacy breaches, "fake news," a shifting world order and a global focus on transparency are not compelling enough reasons for trust to be top of mind for every organization, consider this statistic: fifty six percent of people worldwide trust business (Edelman, 2019).

In such a challenging environment, how do organizations build trust? How do they measure the

trust stakeholders have in them?

In this paper, we examine how organizations build trust with external stakeholders and discuss the measurement tool of a stakeholder's trust in an organization, called the *Client Trust Index™*. The *Client Trust Index™* was created by the lead researcher as a business metric for organizations to understand stakeholder sentiment and the customer experience.

## Literature review

A few models and measures to evaluate organizational trust have been created over the years, including Larry Cummings and Philip Bromily's (1996) organizational trust inventory; and Pamela Shockey- Zalabak et al.'s (2010) model to measure trust within organizations. These models measure trust inside an organization. However there has been limited research about how organizations evaluate external stakeholder's trust levels (Uslaner, 2000-2001; Zand, 1997).

Using social exchange theory and stakeholder theory, we situate our discussion of the role of trust as a key mechanism in the understanding of organizational stakeholder sentiment and experience.

## Methodology

For this study, we present the results of findings from surveys administered to 617 stakeholders/customers of seven organizations. All seven organizations are for-profit companies however, none are comparable.



They operate in different industries; provide different products and services; serve different geographical markets; and different customers. Each organization used the data and results of the *Client Trust Index™* to fulfill different business objectives. We present them as individual case studies.

We then use these findings to present a propositional model that offers principles for organizations to apply, to build and strengthen trust, and offer a measurement tool to evaluate an organization's trust equity level with stakeholders.

We propose to discuss the case studies and our experiences measuring trust for multiple organizations. We will share results and experiences with the audience.

## Conclusion: Practical and Social Implications

Trust is no longer a concept that businesses and their leaders should consider as difficult to quantify. Last year's events as well as the research and evidence make it clear: customer and stakeholder trust is the single greatest competitive advantage an organization has.

Trust cannot be left to chance. Building it and protecting it must be managed. Failure to understand this can have existential consequences. The question always

is, do your customers trust you? And if so, how much? The bottom line for organizations is that trust drives business performance.

Trust is both measurable and manageable. Building and protecting trust equity requires a purposeful, intentional long-term commitment.

## Keywords

*Trust; Stakeholder; Customer Sentiment; Measurement*

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# Trust and reputation in hospitals and healthcare systems

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## Abstract

The decision makers who do not know what the market thinks of their organization and who try to position the organisation far from the market perception, could face a major waste of time and money in attempt to shift the existing perception. In case of the healthcare system in Slovenia there are different players on the market, in fact it consists of different stakeholders: citizens, patients, doctors, healthcare and other non-governmental organisations, insurance companies, journalists, political decision makers and others.

In case the stakeholders think that particular healthcare organisation is manipulative, that it is governed by inefficient procurement and management processes, patients and insurance companies may not believe that the organisation is doing everything in the best interests of the patients. Regardless how the organisation's decision makers and public relations department try to position the organisation, it may not obtain the reputation of a transparent, trustworthy institution. Therefore, Slovenian hospitals need some unbiased research to understand what the market thinks of them.

In the proposed paper we will examine the dimensions of positioning and we will try to lay down the importance of numerous attributes in positioning of the two university medical centres and ten regional hospitals. Just a few factors in studying the positioning could be as follows:

1. Hospital reputation; to know the hospitals because of what people say about them, rather than by having direct experience of them.
2. Hospital rating of two university medical centres and the ten regional hospitals by objective standards if they exist.
3. Physician referral; in Slovenian healthcare system this stands for referrals from primary to second-

ary level combined with the assumption that a particular physician is in the network of opinion leaders.

4. Friend or relative referral combined with word of mouth and social media.
5. Variety of services of a particular hospital: does it have the services I might need.
6. Costs are covered by basic insurance scheme.
7. Location and how people gravitate toward the location...

Some of the factors, or variables in quantitative research, can be influenced by communication and relationship management to help the decision makers and organizations build trust and reputation. Proceeding from the factors we will determine different stakeholders with whom the organisations should engage even in the world with diminishing trust. The advantage we see in the analysis of stakeholders rather than the different target groups lies in the fact that stakeholders hold their own beliefs and interests and can not be taken as the passive target group accepting the key messages conveyed through mass media, social media or some other information vehicle. It is necessary to engage with stakeholders while it suffices to communicate with the target groups. Hereby we propose to communicate with the target groups with weak influence over the healthcare system and to engage with the stakeholders which can influence the positioning, hospital ratings and the industry standards, such as quality indicators revolving around patients' safety and quality. Furthermore, stakeholders act on their own and their actions affect the healthcare system in which each individual hospital operates. Interplay of the organisations' actions and stakeholders' activities most significantly influences the scope of services provided within a national healthcare system.

## Key words

*Trust, reputation, hospitals, healthcare systems*

# Communication and Corporate Citizenship in a VUCA world: an empirical research

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## Introduction and Purpose of the study

In our contemporaneity that many designate under the acronym VUCA (volatile, unpredictable, complex and ambiguous) it is urgent to rethink, paraphrasing Woot (2013, 2016), “in the face of the force of things”, the responsibility of the human being. It does not seem enough to search for a new political paradigm, but it seems that we all need a new way of life. More than the notion of mission or vision, it is the notion of purpose that guides organizational practices and performances, and position them in global ecosystems as partners with other companies or entities from other sectors. Companies today must regain values that have been lost for a few decades and that lead them to assume their role as citizens in communities, with their rights and duties, as each and every one of us.

It's precisely in this sense that this research was constructed. Assuming a constitutive interpretation of the concept of “communication” that enables us to understand it as belonging to the realm of any organization, as well as avoiding any instrumental vision of the concept of “Corporate Social Responsibility” (CSR), related to the merely instrumental role attributed to some notions as those of sustainability or accountability. In Portugal, The GRACE Association congregates 158 organisations from both the private and non governmental sectors, that are specially interested in the above mentioned questions.

In this research authors tried to figure out not only if the

concepts of “social responsible enterprise”, “corporate social responsibility”, “corporate social investment” and “corporate citizenship” were used by the GRACE associates, but also how they were used and what they meant for each one of those specific organizations.

## Literature Review

The decision authors took, from a theoretical point of view, to design the research based on the concept of “Corporate Citizenship” is intentional. This notion emerged in recent years as rescuing some of the ideas prevailing in Western societies before the neoliberal turn of the last decades of the 20th century (Woot, 2004, 2013). In the perspective of the first publisher of The Journal of Corporate Citizenship, a journal published quarterly in the UK, “true corporate citizenship involves much more than what has traditionally been called CSR” (Waddock, 2003: 3). To paraphrase Pattern, in a theoretical framework that we can call an “ethics of duty,” a clearly modern paradigm, to act well is still, in the end, to act in our best interest. Do these organisations act according to these idea? What do they consider as belonging to the realm of CSR? What is the role of strategic communications in these processes (Hallahan et al., 2007)?

## Methodology

From a theoretical point of view the research belongs to the realm of an interpretative paradigm of



investigation. Interviews (according an open script) that met all requirements both from the point of view of ethical issues (eg. issues of informed consent) and from the point of view of research validity (triangulation) were performed and recorded. Although the theme is not at all consensual, it was decided to maintain the phase related to the collection of data (information) separated from the phase of its analysis. Although with some contamination it is hoped that somehow preserving the interviewers from being overly influenced by previous respondents during subsequent interviews. The interviews were transcribed in full. It is intended with transcription (unlike for example what would be expected if the option were the one of the paraphrase or the summary) to preserve the sense of the speaker, that is to say, the transcription allows not to make interpretations previous to the analysis, thus maintaining a greater proximity to the original data. A qualitative content analysis was afterwards performed (Berger, 2014). Some of the limitations that are intrinsic to this type of analyses are also assumed (Seidman, 2013), and they are related to a certain amount of perspectivism that is due to the fact that the "facts" are somehow always mediated by the experience itself.

### Results and Conclusions

If some consensus were found, they dealt with the idea that almost all the organizations consider social work as belonging to their practices and a major issue in their work and none of them seem to have major policies in what we may refer as questions concerning governance and work life balance policies. Major differences appear when confronting national and international organizations, as well according to activities sectors, in aspects related to the questions of quality, safety and environment. Questions of ethics and transparency aren't focused as often as we might have expected. Some sectors specifically in the area of services offered some of the most unexpected results in terms of the economic investments put in the area of CSR. At this moment, authors are still gathering the last results notably in what concerns CSR and government financial incentives.

### Keywords

*Corporate Citizenship; Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR); Communication Management*

## How Big is Public Relations?

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### Introduction

The authors are aware that algorithms and artificial intelligence (AI) are automating both traditional and emerging public relations activities and functions. We see this happening every day, yet we do not know the speed and overall thrust of such automation process. In any case, the authors main interest here is proposing a methodology to estimate the 'economic-and-beyond' impact of public relations. We believe this impact may be enhanced by AI tools, but frankly we don't know.

Nevertheless, due also in part to this automation process, the authors would argue that the quality of any organization's relationships with its stakeholder publics is more and more becoming its essential purpose. As the quality of these relationships improves, so does the organization's reason to exist. It is not the purpose of this paper to present evidence to support this belief, but it is an important underlying assumption.

This development is in great part due to the Global Alliance's Melbourne Mandate working group and its finally approved document of 2013 as well as to the thoughts and elaborations of Dr. Mervyn King and to the increasingly international approval in major markets of many countries of the International Integrated Reporting Council's conceptualization of relationship capital.

The authors also believe that public relations is a professional practice which, based on a growing and increasingly dynamic body of knowledge and framework of capabilities, is consciously and measurably developing and improving the quality of these relationships, so that objectives are more quickly achieved by active, constructive and reciprocal listening, dialog, interaction and monitoring in analog and digital spaces.

With this new paper, we are updating a first edition

written back in 2005 and published by the Institute for Public Relations. It argued that the professional identity of public relations is not just a supporting channel for advertising and marketing, nor simply another management function of the staff variety. Rather, it is central to how we ourselves -- as professionals, practitioners, managers, scholars, educators and students -- understand what we do, evaluate our impact on society at large and, most importantly, argue and promote these approaches with our key stakeholders.

Since the original paper, 13 years have passed. The profession has significantly modified its processes as the result of factors such as the unexpected deceleration of globalization, the return of nation-state, populism, and an increasingly disruptive digital mutation. These factors along with the migration tsunami, climate concerns and a growing disparity of quality of life have created, as the title of this XXV Bledcom symposium purposely states,

**"A World in Crisis: The Role of Public Relations."**

### ARGUING THE EXISTENCE OF A PUBLIC RELATIONS PROFESSION

1. Some believe we no longer need to fight for our identity as a profession. The co-authors of this paper believe this is wishful thinking. Whether or not you agree, here are our thoughts on the subject as it relates to this paper.

A profession like accounting, legal or medicine supplies objective counsel and service to others, in exchange for direct compensation. This implies full-time occupation, specialised training, university degrees, local, national and international associations as well as codes of professional ethics and, at least in some countries, licensing requirements.

Putting an economic value on what we do and being

evaluated through a process similar to what is used for other professions is possibly a critical step toward being perceived in the same light.

So far, and with our mostly passive acceptance, efforts in qualitative evaluation and quantitative measurement of our impact have analyzed public relations as if it was a service industry where the demand, often believed to be mostly from the private sector, meets the offer of services provided by agencies, consultancies, solo operators and, of course, managers operating from inside institutions and organizations. Very little, if any, attention has been focused on the impact of public relations in its entirety – which includes public relations activities in all sectors of society: private sector yes, but also the public and social sectors (NGOs, charities, foundations...).

In many countries of the world (Germany, Italy, Brasil, Nigeria, Spain, Portugal...) the public sector alone accounts for more than 50% of the number of estimated active public relations operators; while the social sector, albeit the smallest, has been experiencing the fastest growth for some time.

2. Another much more recent and at least equally relevant issue pertaining to the impact of public relations is that many professionals and scholars, also inspired by the works of thinkers like Robert Putnam related to social capital, have been actively contributing to organizations like the IIRC related to its conception of relational capital, the development of the integrated reporting and thinking and a global movement spurred also by thinkers like Mervin Kingas well as to Hon and Grunig's admirable work on evaluating the quality of relationships on the basis of the four indicators of trust, satisfaction, commitment and control mutuality in the relationship, by interested parties .. to the point that we have come to believe that communication is certainly a very important tool, but that the quality of relationships with key stakeholder groups is, in fact, any organization's ultimate objective.

This more recent impact variable of our activity in the evaluation and measurement of national and international social and economic impacts of public relations is also perfectly aligned with the work of those economists and policy makers who in very recent years have been advocating different approaches to evaluating and measuring a country's human, economic and social performances.

3. If we interpret our impact on society as the "induced output" of public relations activities in specific territories, rather than just the income annually exchanged

between buyers and sellers of services, and we sum all the above mentioned qualitative variables, we arrive at numbers which are substantially different from those we have so far considered as generally reliable.

Until now, in fact, we have welcomed the adoption of criteria normally used for the advertising industry: i.e. the researcher creates a (more or less) representative basket of organizations; inquires the size of their annual allocated budgets; compares these to the year before; extrapolates the resulting figures to a (more or less) valid universe of organizations; and finally comes up with a figure purporting to show the economic impact of public relations in a specific country or territory.

In short, public relations and advertising are treated as if they were both capital-intensive with an impact equal to the sum of resources allocated by organizations in order to sustain activities, respectively considered as public relations or advertising.

The two activities however are significantly different in their processes and it seems clear that, while both obviously require financial resources, public relations is much more labor-intensive than advertising which, in turn, is typically capital-intensive.

4. While increasing the impact of public relations very much depends on the number of qualified professionals involved in any specific activity, a similar magnification of advertising impact may be effectively accomplished by an increased financial investment in mainstream or digital media space and/or time.

This is not necessarily true for public relations: in most instances this investment relies more on the time invested by professionals in either activating relationships with influential publics or in communicating with these publics via current forms of digital/analog listening, dialogue, exchange and spaces.

The question then becomes: would this difference appear as a sufficient reason to claim that public relations is a labor-intensive activity, not unlike accounting or legal or medical that generally accept that the evaluation of their impact be also composed by:

- The number of professionals (the fact that they are licensed in many countries, for the sake of this argument, indicates only that their actual numbers are more easily identifiable) and their annual gross salary, multiplied by a generally agreed-upon factor used to determine professional billing rates (while we may use the term "multiplier" for



this factor, it has nothing to do with media value multipliers that have been widely rejected in the public relations field).

- And, of course, all other necessary event, publication, distribution, research investments.

The implication is that it does make sense to analyze the economic impact of advertising by summing the total of financial resources invested by organizations to acquire space/time in various digital/analog channels, also because the cost of space/time includes the added value determined by the dynamics of the market (simply put: it is the market that defines the cost of a minute of advertising on CNN vs. other media).

This same approach, in turn, would **not** be a valid criteria to analyze the impact of public relations because a great amount of resources invested are represented by the gross costs of the professionals directly or indirectly involved in the planning, preparing, listening, dialoguing, distributing and evaluating of programs, spaces, events, contents and publications aimed at improving the quality of relationships between the organization and its stakeholder groups and to accelerate the time of implementation of its objectives.

5. If one looks at it from this perspective, to estimate the impact of public relations in a given area, country or region, therefore one would need to:

- Identify the number of professionals directly or indirectly involved.
- Estimate their gross annual salary cost to their organizations, or on whose behalf they supply counsel and services to other parties;
- Adopt an economic multiplier accounting for the actual gross cost of those professionals to the client organization (including full overhead/benefit costs plus an economic return on such expenditures -- while agencies typically operate in this way, corporations, non-profits and even government agencies that don't may not be effectively allocating resources to the best available returns). It would seem senseless for an organization to invest resources in activities whose final value is considered equal to or lower than their gross cost, including economic return.
- Once more, the difference from advertising is that the highly variable value of media space and/or time already considers the potential effect of the advertising messages, whereas this is in no way true for the value of public relations activities.
- In analogy with other professional activities such

as accounting or legal, the overall gross cost of the public relations professional normally is obtained in average by multiplying by 3 her net salary (one third to cover payroll cost, one third to cover the organization's overhead costs, and one third to account for gross profits for the organizations she works for). Of course the variations are many, including the perceived value of that single professional to the organization ;

- Add all other outstanding involvement and/or engagement investments by the organization related to achieve the pursued objective, such as events, publications, spaces and, occasionally, even advertising.
- Add evaluation of the pursued relational capital in this case, by the profession in specific territories (including estimate cost of research, studies, conferences, training and other related items).

## DEMONSTRATING THE METHODOLOGY ON THREE SAMPLE COUNTRIES

The next step therefore is to verify if, by using official and unofficial yet acceptable sources, we can identify the number of public relators directly or indirectly occupied in public relations activities in a given territory. It is important at this point to clarify that in the authors' opinion the estimated figures indicated below are grossly underestimated. Nevertheless, let us look at three different countries.

Not that these countries are more Important than any other countries, but we have solid data to work with as a preliminary analysis to what follows below.

### USA

According to the 2017 Government Census Bureau there are 260,000 public relations specialists in the US and their median annual pay amounts to approximately \$60,000 dollars. Also there are 73,500 public relations managers and their median annual pay amounts to \$112,000.

According to this source a public relations specialist creates and maintains a favorable public image for the organization by crafting media releases and developing social media programs to shape public perception and increase awareness of the organization's work and goals, while public relations and fundraising managers plan campaigns to raise donations or improve the public image of their clients. This definition however is likely to exclude professionals involved in employee communication, involvement and engagement

programs. It is also doubtful if it includes investor, analysts and financial relations professionals. Certainly it does not include undergraduate and graduate level professors, academics, researchers of public relations and lastly does not explicitly consider public policy analysts, lobbyists nor the rising segments of digital operators.

Therefore, one might also wish to consider a much more realistic, timely and comprehensive definition of public relations. For example: creating, consolidating, improving and managing conscious and planned relationships with an organization's influential publics, i.e., those publics whose decisions, behaviors, opinions and attitudes produce consequences for the organization and who, in turn, are impacted by the consequences of its decisions, behaviors, opinions and attitudes.

In any case, even by considering only the US Census Bureau income numbers and multiplying these by, say, the magical number of 3, the annual generated gross economic impact of 333,500 professionals gives a total of more than \$71 billion. To this one should then add the ever increasing cost of the digital adaptation, transformation and distribution of contents; the costs of the increasing number of events and publications and one easily comes close to an annual impact approaching the \$100 billion mark.

#### UK

According to the CIPR's 2018 'state of the profession' report there are today 71,000 PR practitioners estimated today in the UK and their average annual salary is \$72,000

According, instead, to the PRCA the number of operators is 83,000.

Same exceptions as with the US census bureau number would apply in this case.

So, if we estimate 100,000 operators whose annual income is 72 thousand and multiply that by 3 we arrive at 22 billion plus other indirect costs we arrive at, say, 25 billion dollars.

#### ITALY

In 2002 the Italian Government ran an official census and decided there were 42,000 public relations professionals in the public sector. The Italian Public relations Federation FERPI used this number and estimated there were then 60,000 all together, including

the private, the social and the consulting sectors. Since then the number has considerably grown. In 2010 the Ferpi estimate rose to 80,000 and today it is more likely to be 100,000. The average gross annual salary today is in the area of \$80,000, and if you multiply this by the magic number of 3 you arrive at \$24 billion, which easily becomes \$25 billion with extra costs.

As much as these estimates are very rough and fail in capturing the actual extent of the profession in those three countries, one can certainly say that by adopting the indicated criteria, the overall impact of public relations in the three countries is significantly larger and more impressive than the traditional and generally accepted estimates applying the capital-intensive approach.

Of course, one would need to make similar estimates for all countries. How can we do this?

### APPLYING THE METHODOLOGY WORLDWIDE

Basically, if one were to consider the whole world, one might, for example, roughly identify and separate at least three major macro-regions along a continuum on the basis of economic development, market strength and known/or/ estimated development of public relations activities under the same definition suggested in this paper:

- A more private-sector-oriented and professionally consolidated macro-region, where we may estimate (based on the country examples above) one professional for every 700/1000 inhabitants.
- A more public-sector-oriented and less professionally developed macro-region, where one may estimate one professional for every 1000/2000 inhabitants.
- And a third mostly public-and-social-sector oriented but professionally developing macro region, where one may estimate one professional for every 2000/5000 inhabitants.

Considering a global population of some 7 billion, we may reasonably attribute 700 million inhabitants to the first region, 1.8 billion to the second, and 4.5 billion to the third.

This would roughly imply:

- 700,000 to 1 million professionals in the first macro-region

- 750,000 to 2 million professionals in the second
- 1 to 3 million professionals in the third.

Summing up, we may estimate from 2.5 to 6.0 million professionals in the world today.

If we apply:

- A conservative individual total annual economic impact of \$150,000 for the first group (based on an average gross salary of \$50,000 and a 3 multiplier);
- An even more conservative \$100,000 to the second group (reflecting an average annual gross salary of \$ 35,000 and a 3 multiplier);
- And a definitely conservative \$75,000 to the third group (reflecting an average annual gross salary of 25,000 and a 3 multiplier)

we would arrive at an annual global economic impact ranging from more than \$250 billion to perhaps \$575 billion.

It goes without saying that if the arguments in this paper were taken seriously, then the next step would be to quickly review and check the numbers and the wild guesses by these authors and (perhaps with the help of an accomplished economist) come up with a reasonable and credible argument, integrating all the variables and indicators – considering however that an estimate is an estimate not only for PR but also for any other profession, including accounting, legal and medical.

## BUT WHY DOES ALL THIS MATTER?

What is the purpose of all this exercise, and why is it so relevant for the public relations profession to review existing criteria for self-identification and evaluation/ measurement of its impact on society? The arguments can be presented from at least four different perspectives:

First, it is highly relevant for public relations professionals to be fully aware (and also be prepared with convincing arguments to make their stakeholders fully aware) that their own professional activity is distinct from advertising and marketing.

This is, of course, an ancient issue which has

accompanied the development of public relations at least since the middle of the last century with the inception of mass market, advertising and marketing. The reality that public relations is more labor-intensive while advertising is more capital-intensive provides a strong argument for differentiation.

All too often public relations, in organizations of all sorts, is placed under the marketing communication umbrella and, at times, even under the advertising umbrella. This defeats the ongoing process of institutionalization of the discipline as it has been growing and developing over these recent years, and we must find and constantly use convincing arguments to promote further differentiation. The capital vs. labor-intensive argument appears to be a forceful one.

Second, if we consider the normal day-to-day estimates of the impact of our profession that we have passively accepted over the years and compare these to advertising, the differences seem to be way out of proportion. Indeed, they seriously misrepresent public relations as a tiny addendum to the overall marketing and advertising budget of the organization.

If we can argue from reliable and convincing estimates that succeed in narrowing the gap, while at the same time bringing light to the true nature of public relations, this becomes highly relevant in reinforcing our professional relevance.

Third, many new entrants into the profession today come from specialized studies in colleges and universities where public relations is taught as a unique discipline. The body of knowledge which public relations has developed and accumulated over the last 20 to 30 years, albeit much in need of reinforcement, is solid enough to establish this notion of a profession on its own, albeit strongly related to others. But there is a dire need for the basic recognition of the above indicated differentiation and it does reasonable to continue to stimulate these new professionals to think as if they were destined only be a sideshow in the advertising/ marketing areas.

Fourth and finally, this reinforces the sound argument that public relations is not merely, nor even mostly, a private sector and/or outsourced consultancy or service based profession. It is equally and, in some countries, even more consolidated in the public and social sectors of society.

# Trust, leadership, communication: parameter setting for action against climate change

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## Introduction and purpose of the study

The research studies the role of trust in building awareness and bringing shift regarding climate change perception, and in turning shifting attitudes into action. Two key areas of trust are identified as essential: leadership and communication. The research matches successful leadership dimensions with relevant communication tools, and creates a model where an appropriate combination of the two are set as parameters for the mobilization of relevant clusters of the population.

## Literature review

The IPCC report (IPCC, 2018) voices a dramatic call to all: in case the average temperature increases by over 1.5 C, climate change will become irreversible. Drastic action must be taken within the next 12 years to stop escalation of the spiral. In spite of the clear conclusion of over 5000 leading scientists, climate change sceptics argue along 2 dimensions, problem and solution definitions. (Corry and Jorgensen, 2015). Sceptics claim that the problem is either non existent, or is not due to human causes – and therefore cannot or should not be influenced by human action. They also state that the proposed solutions are wrong and mean actual interference into natural processes. Nevertheless, with acceptance of climate change becoming the dominant view, engagement of the individual is essential in gearing action against climate change. Mobilisation needs to build on 2 factors: leadership and communication, with trust being essential to the success of both. The last 100 years of management and leadership speak of 4 different successful leadership styles (Western, 2005, 2008). The current analysis addresses how the

combination of the relevant leadership dimensions with communication can address relevant clusters of the youth population in Hungary and in Vietnam.

## Methodology

The research builds on the further elaboration of the data from a comparative study in 2018 of youth population in Hungary and in Vietnam, analysing urban climate change crisis attitudes. In the case of Hungary, data has been collected through analysis of the ESS 2018 data on climate change, while for Vietnam a similar research was conducted through direct online questionnaires. Representativeness of both pieces of research allow for direct comparisons. Clusters were created based on the evaluation of the 2 sets of data. The definition and characteristics of the clusters were matched against prevailing leadership dimensions, and against media and communication preferences of the actual clusters.

## Results and conclusions

Findings of the research show that trust is essential for accepting the possibility of action against climate change. Trust is a critical element in accepting guidance and leadership in the process of change. Governments, corporations, NGOs and individuals all have a fundamental role in addressing the climate challenge, while the general loss in trust in institutions cannot be neglected. Younger respondents express a higher level of trust in governments taking action than the older respondents. Lack of trust in guidance and leadership would eliminate actual participation of the individuals. Choice of communication tools need to match cluster



preferences. Information will only be credible from those leaders and through those channels that members of the clusters consider credible, reasonable, honest and trustworthy. A combination of information sources, including family, friends, traditional media, social media, corporate material and scientific information, can actually influence attitudes and bring action. Finding the optimal combinations of leadership and communication poses significant challenges to generate and lead action against climate change.

### Practical and social implications

Through identification of the required leadership and communication parameters, the research contributes to the creation of localised strategies in bringing action against climate change. In overall terms the research can contribute to the formation of relevant response strategies and tactics in the field of reversing climate change.

### Keywords

*climate change, leadership, communication, action*

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# Rebuilding trust and reputation by negotiating crisis in social media era

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## Introduction and purpose

Building trust and reputation has become the underpinning for an organization building and protecting relations with stakeholders. Globalization and digitalization bring many challenges for organizations to maintain trust and reputation among stakeholders that social media allows crises to escalate online even overseas. How to rebuild damaged trust and reputation when crises happened in social media environment has become a hot issue. This paper aims to examine how crises triggered on social media, how trust and reputation will be damaged throughout crises, and whether social media will be an effective tool for organizations to protect their reputation and regain trust from stakeholders.

Research questions:

- Q1: What role does social media play when crises happened?
- Q2: What functions does social media have in rebuilding trust and reputation?

## Literature review

Christ (2007) stated that the advent of new communication technology and the wide use of social media have changed the communication model between organizations and stakeholders. Siah et al.(2010) viewed the prevalent use of social media as a double-edged sword for crisis management. Social media has shifted crisis communication from one-many model to many-many model (Coombs, 2015), and the new model may hinder key messages generated by PR practitioners from reaching out to the related stakeholders as intended (Helm, 2011; Freberg, 2012). Stakeholders are allowed to share information

freely online, which brings more challenges to crisis management (Sung & Hwang, 2014; Gruber, Smerek, Thomas-Hunt & James, 2015). Regaining trust and rebuilding reputation has become harder that information vacuum has been difficult to manage in the social media environment (Pang, 2013; Pang, Hassan &Chong, 2014)

## Methodology

This research mainly adopts case study to answer the questions mentioned above. In order to build analytic generalizations, two crisis cases will be chosen (Dolce &Gabbana and DiDi ) and the paper will analyze how these crises triggered and escalated online, examine the life cycles of two crises and explore the functions of social media during crisis management.

## Results and conclusions

Crises are easily triggered online especially in the social media era that stakeholders are empowered to generate information publicly without limitations. Issues always be raised on YouTube, Twitter and Instagram that have large user base, while Facebook and blogs create places for stakeholder communities to discuss even escalate crises. In china, issues raised from overseas could still spread via Weibo and WeChat, even under the strict VPN policy (e.g. 2018 D&G Ins Crisis). Social media brings negative influence in maintaining trust and reputation during crisis in some extent, while plays a key role in rebuilding trust and reputation after crisis. On one hand, social media could expand the information vacuum if organizations do not respond in time or respond in a wrong way. On the other hand, social media makes organizations communicate with stakeholders directly that organizations have the credibility to rebuild relationship with stakeholders and





regaining trust and reputation from them.

For organizations, they have to fill the information vacuum when crisis happened and take the identities of target stakeholders into consideration when managing crisis communication. National culture and nationalism are key issues for crisis management that organizations could prevent crisis in advance and react correctly during crisis, so that worse crisis outcomes would be stopped earlier. In addition, the value of KOLs should not be ignored by organizations during crisis management.

### Research limitations/implications

This research aims to define the functions (both negative and positive) of social media in crisis management. However, the functions are concluded from the study of two cases, some functions may be missed and needed to be added.

### Practical and social implications

How PR practitioners can deal with online crises and counter them with effective social media tools.

How organizations could prevent crises triggered online and regain their trust/reputation via social media.

### Keywords

*trust and reputation, crisis management, function, social media*

# Trust and Reputation of Secret Intelligence Services: Challenges in the Times of Hybrid War on the Example of the Czech Republic

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## Abstract

Trust is a foundation of social relations in democratic society – and this is valid even more in the case of secret intelligence services (SIS), the government and citizens. In times of so-called attention economy (Davenport and Beck, 2001, Ciampaglia, Flammini and Menczer, 2015), those who can be more presented in social and traditional media and set their agenda, appear to be more successful in pursuing their goals and interests. In the past decade, there has been a rising need for strategic communication, especially for government bodies and non-commercial institutions (Hallahan, Holtzhausen, Van Ruler and Verčič, 2017, Zerfass and Holtzhausen, 2014). As Verčič argues, we are witnessing the mediatization of everything, and “transformation of all kinds of organizations into media organizations” (Verčič, 2016, p. 28). But how does this simple mathematics apply to secret intelligence services, which should be – by their definition – secret, not open to the media or publics? As Sherman Kent noted in 1949, “proper relationship between intelligence producers and consumers is one of utmost delicacy” (Kent, 1949, p. 180). The role of SIS is to report to the politicians and government, which makes decisions based on the information and intelligence provided by secret services. Should they also accommodate to the media logic and become another voice of the government communication or should they keep a low profile? How should they react if they are attacked directly by the leading politicians, diminishing their role and capability?

This paper examines an interesting situation in the Czech Republic, which has for a long time been an important battlefield between the East and the West. Since the Ukrainian crisis in 2014, there exist a fierce

battlefield of hybrid war, supported by dozens of so-called fake news or pro-Russian media. On the other side, the counterpart is not so clear, represented by a few openly pro-EU and pro-NATO groups and individuals. Recently, some politicians, namely the elected president Miloš Zeman, has expressed a clear distrust in the competence of the Secret Intelligence Services, calling them “čučkaři” (losers) and acting repeatedly in the clear opposition to an official foreign policy, namely causing a stir by saying that “novichok” was produced in the Czech Republic, which was denied by other political sources. Also, an international case of misgiving towards technologies provided by a Chinese company Huawei was communicated by the president in differently to the official government communication. The goal of this paper is firstly to examine the discourse of the political communication, presented in the media, and draw a political narrative (hypothesis is there is one), led by the Czech president Miloš Zeman on one side and official government communication on the other side (represented namely by the Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs, and the Secret Intelligence Service Bezpečnostní Informační Služba (BIS). We will examine to what extent are selected information of the SIS being politicized (Rovner, 2011). Based on the main narratives and political opinion, expressed by those two parties, we will design a questionnaire to test the public opinion in these matters. Secondly, we will examine the reflection of these opinions or political narratives in the public opinion research on the adult population (people interested in politics and public affairs).

## Literature review

The rising role of strategic communication in both companies and non-commercial institutions, which

has been adopted in today's fully mediated world, has been described and analyzed by a number of leading scholars (Hallahan, Holtzhausen, Van Ruler and Verčič, 20017, Zerfass and Holtzhausen, 2014, Verčič, 2016). However, when it comes to adopting a strategic communication in governmental bodies, the definitions become more tricky: what some might call a "public diplomacy" or simply "government communication", can be perceived as "propaganda" by the others. Especially since the Edward Snowden's case, there is an ongoing debate about the role and function of secret intelligence services in democratic societies. There are number of As Vian Bakir examined, only a fraction of academic literature covers its role in regard to the fields of media, journalism and communication and asks a question about the legitimacy and competences in agenda-building and public relations of the intelligence services (Bakir, 2015). Some studies examine critically the role of communication of intelligences services from a standpoint of uncovering media manipulation (Dorri, 2002, Magen, 2015, Wood and Wright, 2015). For our research, it is important to question the aspect of "politicization" of (mis)using selected information by the SIS to pursue individual political goals: John A. Gentry describes it as "partisan bias" on the example of the U.S. political situation and president Donald Trump (Gentry, 2018, p. 647).

### Methodology

The research will be conducted using critical discourse analysis on selected Czech media in 2018-19. Critical discourse analysis will be based on the principles set by T. van Dijk (1993) and Norman Fairclough (2001, 2013). Critical discourse analysis enables to uncover hidden relations of power that are implicitly embedded in the text. Also, in a complicated media situation, we have to bear in mind subtle factors as possible partisanship, self-censorship or ownership-based bias of the journals or journalists (namely in the case of leading daily Mladá fronta and other media outlets, which are owned by the Prime Minister Andrej Babiš).

Public opinion research will be conducted using standard sociological methodology in cooperation with professional public opinion research agency, targeting politically engaged population 18-65 y.o., N=500.

### Results and Conclusions

There are no results available yet.

### Practical and Social Implications

We believe that the results of the study will broaden knowledge about the role and function of SIS in an important region of CEE in the times of the hybrid war. Practical implications should also tackle the issue of trust management and strategic communication of SIS and formulate recommendations based on this study: how to enhance the trust of the publics, how to communicate with the media in order to enhance trust of SIS. The results will bring us more insight about the politicization if SIS information and polarization of public opinion by political leaders. Also, we expect to bring more insight about possible influence of Russian information war and their effects on communication and opinions of political leaders in CEE.

### Keywords

*Intelligence agencies, strategic communication, government communication, trust, reputation management, politicization*

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# CSR/Sustainability Reporting and Corporate Reputation: A Research based on Turkish Corporations

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## Introduction and purpose of the study

This paper is based on a research on the relationship between CSR / sustainability reporting and corporate reputation. This research aims to establish the link between CSR/Sustainability reporting and corporate credibility based on the model developed by Odriozola & Baribar-Diez.

## Literature review

According to legitimacy and stakeholder theories, disclosure is part of the dialogue between a company and its stakeholders, allowing the company to manage reputational risks (Michelon, 2011). According to agency theory, disclosures reduce the asymmetries of information between the company and the different stakeholders (Verrecchia, 1983; Brown & Hillegeist, 2007; Clarkson et al., 2008; Martínez-Ferrero et al., 2015). CSR and sustainability reporting is part of a firm's communication tools to decrease information asymmetries and is mainly directed to a share the social contributions of a company to attract better valuation and thus higher credibility and trust. From this perspective, CSR and sustainability reports are produced with a concern to develop and maintain the trust of the stakeholders. CSR information has been the focus of many investigations in the academic literature, showing the impact on the image of the company (Ellen et al., 2006) and corporate and labor reputation (Odriozola et al., 2015).

Odriozola & Baribar-Diez developed a model to measure the relationship between the credibility of the CSR/sustainability reporting and corporate reputation (Odriozola & Baribar-Diez, 2017).

## Methodology

The reputation assessment of Turkish firms is done by Capital's annual research, which discloses only the first 10 companies in 2016 and the first 20 in 2017 and 2018 in the reputation index. Capital's research is based on the interview of approximately 1500 managers of the BIST 500 firms. The survey is based on 22 performance criteria to determine reputation. Capital's reputation research focuses on three indicators, namely reputation, credibility and performance. We inquired the best reputed firms for in 2016-2018, and analysed their reports with respect to the measures of quality described by Odriozola & Baribar-Diez. Quantitative content analysis is performed on the CSR/Sustainability reports of 29 companies between 2016-2018.

## Results and conclusions

Preliminary findings show that corporate reputation is closely related to higher standards in reporting. It also determined that sectoral differences play an important role in CSR reporting in Turkey. Due to the limitations of the information of reputation index in Turkey, we had to adapt Odriozola & Baribar-Diez's model. Further research should focus on the customers' awareness of and reaction to the CSR/Sustainability roles as well as the corporate determinant on the process of reporting.

## Practical and social implications

With this research, we hope to determine the most important qualities of CSR/sustainability reports for companies in the Turkish business context. We also compare the differences between local and international corporations reporting standards.



## Keywords

Reputation, CSR/Sustainability Reporting, Stakeholder Theory

	2016	2017	2018
1	Koç	Koç Holding	Koç Holding
2	Arçelik	Arçelik	Arçelik
3	Unilever	Garanti Bankası	Eczacıbaşı
4	Garanti	Unilever	Turkcell
5	CocaColal	THY	THY
6	Turkcell	Coca Cola	Unilever
7	P&G	Eczacıbaşı	Türkiye İş Bankası
8	THY	Turkcell	Sabancı Holding / Garanti Bankası
9	Vodafone	Türkiye İş Bankası	BHS
10	Eczacıbaşı	Bosusan Holding	Procter and Gamble
11		Vodafone	CocaCola
12		Sabancı Holding	Borusan Holding
13		Migros	YemekSEpeti
14		Ülker	Vodafone
15		Doğuş holding	Tüpraş
16		P&G	Boyner
17		Vestel	Ford Otosan
18		Anadolu Grubu	Doğuş Holding / Opet / Aselsan
19		Ford Otosan	LCWaikiki
20		Akban	Betek / Migros / Şişecam

The list of the corporations that are included in the sample of the research as appeared in the reputation index by Capital.



# It takes two to tango? Debate on the PR-journalists trust and relationship (re)building in the fake news era

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## Introduction and purpose of the study

Trust has been a long-standing issue for building a healthy and productive relationship between public relations (PR) practitioners and journalists. Fake news, either aggregated by algorithms based on economic interests or constructed by individuals through social media, presents new opportunities to reflect on the trust and relationship (re)building between PR and journalism. This study aims to investigate how the two parties perceive their relationship(s) to address the common challenge of declining public trust and reputation risk in their own profession field.

## Literature review

An overview of the literature reveals that the relationship between public relations and journalism has experienced four stages: 1) Antagonism. Journalists hold outright hostility towards PR because of their concern about the sheer volume and manipulative influence from public relations information (Hansuch, 2012); 2) Less adversarial, marked by somewhat mutual recognition of each profession's role in news production (Neijens & Smit, 2006); 3) Love-hate sentiments, referring to co-existing collaboration and conflicts, or the "mutual processes of adaptation" between the two professions (Schönhagen & Meißner, 2016); and 4) Convergence, indicating the blurring boundaries and deeper cooperation between journalism and PR in the digital age (Zerfass, Vercic, & Wiesenberger, 2016). However, the literature falls short in explaining how the two professions can (re)build trust and/or explore new space and ways of collaboration to relieve the erosion of public trust in the fake news era.

## Methodology

Given its exploratory nature, this study applied in-

depth interviews for data collection. 24 interviews with both PR practitioners (n=12) and journalists (n=12) were conducted face-to-face in Sydney, Australia in early 2018. Through purposive 'snowball' sampling, PR practitioners were recruited from Public Relations Institute of Australia (PRIA) while journalists were approached from The Walkley Foundation, a not-for-profit organisation supporting robust and independent journalism in Australia. The interview guide has focused on asking the two professions' perceptions and evaluation of their (changing) relationships and levels of trust in the fake news era.

## Results and conclusions

The results show divergent views about the two professions' mutual trust and relationship building in this particular fake news context. First, the mistrust between the two professions becomes worse because journalists seek to improve independent, fact-checking process, while PR practitioners continue choosing to go 'direct' to audiences by using organizations' social platforms and thus bypassing traditional media 'filter'. Second, trust building between the two professions can be contingent upon whether the personal relations are positive and whether the professional goals are aligned. Third, fake news environment creates new opportunities of building trust and deliberate collaboration between the two professions. Only by doing so can they conjointly combat fake news originated from click-bait social media and widely distributed among individuals. Fourth, the two professions will continue to be in different places (no connections) given their fundamentally different missions and values. Further, the findings throw new light on a 'Maslow's hierarchical model of five levels of ideal PR-journalism relationship': respect, collegiality, trust, partnership and self-actualisation (PR and journalism sever public interest and civil society through different ways).

### Practical and social implications

This study offers practical implications for both PR practitioners and journalists to rethink about their relationship, especially where and in what ways they can collaborate realistically in this chaotic and noisy communication environment. This research also illuminates what barriers exist between the two professions to build mutual trust before they can collaboratively rebuild public trust in news production. On a broad level, this study sparks a deep reflection on how to maintain integrity and credibility in public communication, as well as free information flow in society from the PR-journalism relational perspective.

### Limitations and future research

The limitation of this study lies in that only one single method (i.e., interviews) was employed and the results mainly relied on self-report data. Future research should incorporate multi-method data collection such as surveys, focus groups, and case studies to ascertain the complexity and dynamics of the relationship between public relations and journalism in this increasingly fragmented communication landscape.

### Keywords

*Trust, relationship (re)building, public relations, journalism, fake news*

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# Social countermarketing in online issue arenas: diagnostic and prognostic framing strategies in food quality debates

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## Introduction and literature review

Social countermarketing (SCM) has recently been introduced (Bellew, Bauman & Freeman, 2017) as a specific type of social marketing (Andreasen, 1994). SCM forms an opposition to ongoing commercial marketing as well as socio-cultural norms related to social, environmental, and health topics. It aims at influencing those norms, public policies, or political decision-making (Bellew et al., 2017). A well-known example from the Netherlands is a campaign on over-fed chicken ("Plofkip") that was initiated by an animal welfare organization and targeted chicken farming but also supermarkets and restaurants (Wakker Dier, 2017). Empirical accounts of SCM, specifically regarding online practices, are scarce. We study SCM from a public relations perspective and analyse social countermarketing strategies in the context of issue arenas, places where stakeholders discuss societal problems (Luoma-aho & Vos, 2010). We analyse how the campaign spreads through social networks. Specifically, we focus on the role of citizens in spreading/intensifying but also potentially transforming campaigning messages sent out by an NGO.

In issue arenas, actors introduce issues (e.g. climate change, #metoo) and discuss their causes, consequences, and solutions, thereby strategically interacting with others in order to categorize, convince,

or mobilize them. This increasingly happens via social media such as Twitter (Authors, 2019). We analyse SCM strategies within issue arenas from the perspective of diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational framing (Snow, 2012). These frames cover the three stages of public debates on social problems. Our research question is: "To what extent contribute citizens to a dissemination of organizational campaign messages in social networks and to what extent do they adopt or transform organizational frames of a campaign?"

## Methods

We analyse three food quality debates on Twitter in the Netherlands for a two-year period (2015-2017). The first debate is on over-fed chickens that are bred to grow fast resulting in physical problems (Wakker Dier, 2017). The second debate is on kilo stunners: meat that is promoted for low prices but has no animal welfare quality mark (Wakker Dier, 2017). The third debate is on bird flu outbreaks and served as a reference case, as this debate did not originate from a social countermarketing campaign, contrary to the other debates. The data was collected with Coosto software, based on hashtags that were typical for each debate. We employed a quantitative content analysis on Twitter messages (N = 4.685) in which we analysed the author types (e.g. citizen, political actor, eco industry) and the frames used by these authors.

### Findings and conclusions

We found that citizens play an important role for social countermarketing campaigns, while the bird flu debate was more strongly influenced by media actors. We found that citizens intensified the debates by tweeting and retweeting about aspects of the core problem related to each of the issues. On the other hand, citizens also brought in their own focus with higher levels of attention for animal welfare and consumer behaviour. Specifically, citizens played an important role for mobilization in the two counter-marketing debates.

Regarding the actors that were held responsible for the issue, we found that responsibilities were more of an issue in social countermarketing debates compared to the bird flu debate. While industry was held responsible for the problem of kilo stunners as well as over-fed chicken, industry actors were also held responsible for solving the problem of over-fed chicken while consumer-related solutions were discussed more frequently in the kilo stunner case. Actors were overall less relevant in the bird flu debate. Mainly political and industry actors were requested to solve the issue.

Comparing citizen-authored tweets to other tweets revealed that citizens tend to assign responsibility to political actors less often (diagnostic responsibility in the context of kilo stunner and prognostic related to bird flu). Industry actors, in contrast, were held responsible for the problem (diagnostic) more often by citizens in the two countermarketing debates – however, not for solving the issues.

### Implications for society and practice

Overall, we observe some tendencies of citizens to keep problems and their solutions in the societal realm, by addressing aspects of consumer behaviour instead of regulation or by focusing on industry actors as opposed to political actors. Our analysis shed light on the interactions between organizations,

citizens, and other stakeholders in these public debates and could thus help to analyse the success of SCM campaigns. In addition to that, our analysis of actors that are held responsible for the issue helps to identify reputational risks for companies that are active in contested industries such as mass meat production

### Keywords

*online issue arenas; social countermarketing; framing; Twitter*

# Revealing crisis consulting: An insight into the client's perception of PR and Communication firms

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## Introduction and purpose of the study

This study analyses the relationship between public relations agencies and their clients when cooperating during crisis situations. As part of a wider research on this specific relationship, this particular study focuses on the perspective of organizations (clients) as recipients of both advice and support. It aims to determine the organization's views on the role they expect their communication agencies and consultants to play in solving organizational crises they encounter, the expectations they have from their consultants and, finally, to explore possible disagreements and discrepancies that most frequently occur between the two groups during their cooperation. Finally, the study will provide a 360° view of this issue, as it will compare the organizations' perspective with the agencies' analyzed in the previous research, thus enabling a comparison of the two different perspectives.

## Literature review

Numerous books, papers and research studies, including Hotz, Ryans Jr. & Shanklin, (1982), Bourland (1993), Henke (1995), Michell & Sanders (1995), Behn & Carcello (1997), LaBahn & Kohli (1997), Lichtenthal & Shani (2000), Hinrichsen (2001), Davies & Paliawadana (2006), Beverland, Farrelly, & Woodhatch (2009), Duhan & Sandvik (2009), Arul (2010 and 2011), Gulsoy (2012), analysed the client-agency relationship, however, mainly from the conventional marketing and ad agency perspective. Nevertheless, a limited number of studies, such as Verčič (2012), Johansen (2017), Verčič, Tench & Tkalac Verčič (2018), focused specifically on communication and public relations agencies and their clients, therefore, it seems justified to broaden the

theoretical overview of this specific field of study.

## Methodology

In 2018, the authors of this paper conducted a study that included 13 in-depth interviews with CEOs / Managing Partners from 13 PR consultancies in Croatia with the aim of determining their views on agency-client issues, specifically from the agency perspective. This study will also use the in-depth interview method, however, interviews will be conducted with individuals in charge of communications in Croatian companies that have regularly, over the last five years, used public relations agency services that included handling and support during crisis situations. Using the same method as in the previous study will enable a comparison of the attitudes of these two groups, providing valuable insights into this specific relationship.

## Results and conclusions

The obtained results will help raise the level of understanding of the perceived position of public relations firms in their clients' eyes, and clients' expectations from agencies. The research will also provide valuable insights into how companies perceive agencies' roles in crisis communication projects. This study will contribute to bridge ubiquitous problems and issues and to establish a better understanding between companies and agencies. The conclusion of the research could be a step closer to a model of doing business and conducting crisis communication for public relations firms and agencies in Croatia.



### Practical and social implications

Besides contributing to the practical and academic thought of crisis communication, this study will help both clients and consultants to conceptualize and better understand their ideal roles within the crisis communication process. Organizations using the services of crisis communication consultants or those considering such action will provide readers of this study with the possibility of better understanding the responsibilities and assignments in crisis communication processes expected from clients.

### Keywords

*client-agency relationship, public relations, crisis communication, public relations firms and agencies, communication consulting, strategic communication*



# Parliamentary PR Online: Leaving the beaten path?

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## Introduction & Purpose

In contemporary parliamentary democracies, the parliament is conceptualized as a discursive space. Elected representatives debate issues of political relevance and arrive at generally binding legislative decisions. From a normative point of view, the transparency of this process is of utmost importance. This holds even more true in an age of growing political populism and its inherent scepticism towards political elites. It is therefore generally considered mandatory for parliaments to maintain a strong communicative link to their electorate; in this perspective, parliamentary PR are simply a necessity (Sarcinelli, 2011).

With the ongoing process of digitalization, communicators face new challenges and demands by their audiences. Fast, comprehensive and dialogic communications become the new standard and those communicating for parliamentary institutions find their work measured against these standards, set not by them, but by corporate communicators and those accounting for the PR of political parties and influential organizations.

Given the institutional routines and constraints they face however, it is not clear if and how they can cope with these new standards and demands (Theiner, Schwanholz, & Busch, 2018). *'The times they are a changing' – but can parliamentary PR keep track with that or does it remain on the beaten path?*

## Methodology

We discuss this question based on an online content analysis of the websites (n=18) and social media presences (n=32) of all 18 German parliaments, focusing on provided forms of information, interaction,

inter-institutional linkages, targeted audiences and, in the case of social media, overall reach. These websites and social media presences were digitally archived and then coded by two coders, reliability was pretested with 15% of the material (RHolsti=0,835).

## Findings

Our findings show that all German parliaments maintain informative and regularly updated websites and not mere 'cyber safety valves' (cf. Jackson & Lilleker, 2009). All but two offer different languages with English and *Leichte Sprache* (a simplified variety of German) as the most common options. Two parliaments offer services in recognized Slavic minority languages. Information services common in party and government communications (cf. Author, 2016) are also widely distributed here.

Parliaments succeed in communicating their legal foundations (18/18), their debates (18/18) and membership (18/18), yet are reluctant in providing transparency about lobbying (4/18). They connect to other institutions on the level of their federated state, yet one finds hardly any linkages to other federated states or the national level. Dialogic functions are only partially integrated into their websites. Special audiences targeted include journalists and children; the offerings for the latter group differ widely in scale and scope.

YouTube is the most common social media channel (11/18), despite the platform's higher demand for content production. It is however utilised in a unidirectional way, not offering any form of dialogue or user interaction. Twitter, normally the medium of choice for political communicators, is less common here (9/18), it is especially noteworthy the Bundestag



(Germany's main parliament) is absent here and recently even had an independent channel reporting its debates and proceedings shut down.

The reach of the social media pages maintained differs widely (Subscriptions: Facebook: M= 1889, SD= 1296; Twitter: M= 11637, SD= 24697; YouTube: M=586, SD= 910), the same holds true for the activity shown on these platforms (widely (Posts/Uploads: Facebook: M= 25, SD= 12; Twitter: M= 75, SD= 71; YouTube: M=1,5, SD= 1,9).

## Conclusion & Implications

At a first glance, it is apparent that parliamentary communicators are now striving to integrate digital communications. They do however act quite cautiously, often sticking to established forms of unidirectional communication. Whenever they try to establish a direct link via social media, the results are somewhat ambivalent, with only few parliaments actually succeeding in maintaining a stable link to their electorate.

Comparing these findings to the wider state of research, one actually sees parallels to the state of government communications just a few years back (DePaula, Dincelli, & Harrison, 2017; Author, 2016). Given the comparatively scarcer resources and the manifold constraints, this is explicable, yet, from a normative point of view, this beaten path is not entirely satisfying.

## Keywords

*Parliamentary PR; Political PR; Political Communication; Online Communication;*

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# Regaining the organisational trust in the fossil fuel industry: challenges and opportunities

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## Abstract

The paper explores challenges and opportunities in regaining the organisational trust in the fossil fuel industry. It seems that organisational trust in the fossil industry is lost forever. Especially, after it was revealed that the fossil businesses already for decades knew about the negative impact of fossil fuel industry on climate and did everything to mislead the society. However, over the past years the fossil industry has put different efforts in regaining the public trust. How successful were these efforts and whether regaining the organisational trust in the fossil industry is possible at all? Answering these questions as well as consideration of necessary conditions for regaining the organisational trust is the main purpose of this paper.

The importance of organisational reputation has been often emphasized in the literature on corporate and social responsibility (Kanter, 1999; Porter and Hamer, 2002). Some authors have suggested stakeholders' engagement as the practice to follow for increasing the public trust in corporations. (Foster and Jonker, 2005; Prado-Lorenzo et al., 2008). However, there is little theory on conditions and strategies for regaining the organisational trust in the conditions of absolute

reputational failure. This paper contributes to this small body of literature by studying the practical attempts in regaining the organisational trust in the fossil fuel industry over the past years. The paper employs a multiple-case-study method to analyse a variety of strategies applied by different business organisations in the fossil fuel industry aiming at regaining the organisational trust and rebuilding the lost reputation. The paper identifies challenges in rebuilding the reputation as well as regaining the organisational trust in the fossil fuel industry and discusses opportunities to overcome these challenges.

The insights from the analysis are of practical importance for the corporate managers dealing with the challenge of regaining the organisational trust. The critical assessment of current attempts in the fossil fuel industry to increase organisational trust contributes to the social discourse on legitimization of different business practices.

## Keywords

*reputation, organisational trust, corporate strategy, fossil fuel industry*

# Trust in social media influencers: How are influencers reinventing public relations?

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## Introduction and purpose of the study

Marketing and public relations professionals are facing the challenge of new communication channels and internet-based social media tools. Digitization and hyper-production of promotional messages (may) have negative effects on users. As a result of information overload, the audience may be confused, skeptical and distrustful toward certain brands or organizations. On the other hand, digital trends and social media create a new type of independent third party endorser who shapes audience attitudes through blogs, tweets, podcasts, online videos and other use of social networks (Freberg, Graham, McGaughey, & Freberg, 2011). Due to the identified persuasive power they have, *social media influencers* (SMIs) are creating a new communication style that is characterized by interaction, conversation and community. Therefore, the main research question in this study is: How are influencers reinventing communication strategies with users? The purpose of this paper is to investigate how important social media influencers really are and if they can win back users' trust. Trust can be viewed as a multi-dimensional construct combining a user's beliefs about another person, such as credibility and trustworthiness. Considering the fact that different beliefs influence different consumer activity intentions, this research primarily evaluates user perspective on the effectiveness of social media influencers, through their expertise, trustworthiness and attractiveness.

## Literature review

It is already indisputable that people trust recommendations far more than advertising (Aral, 2013). In addition, traditional and inefficient methods

of mass advertising are shifting toward peer-to-peer and word-of-mouth campaigns. Public relations literature recognizes the potential of shaping partnerships with SMIs to promote a brand or an organization. Expertise, credibility and trustworthiness, as well as attractiveness, are important matters for SMIs since they are perceived as a credible source of information nowadays (Freberg, Graham, McGaughey, & Freberg, 2011). Relevant literature on public relations has identified the characteristics of effective spokespersons, but there is a lack of studies that deal with audience perceptions of trust in SMIs. For the purpose of this research, the Ohanian model (1990) for the celebrity endorser and credibility scale was used. Observations from the literature in the field of celebrity endorsers indicate expertise, trustworthiness and attractiveness as the most important attributes of credibility. Considering the fact that SMIs are modern third party endorsers who shape audience attitudes online, these three dimensions were measured for the identified, most popular SMIs in Serbia.

## Methodology

In order to maximize organizational benefits from SMIs and reinvent public relations strategies, it is necessary to find precise information about relevant influencers and how they are perceived by audience. This research consists of two phases. In the first phase, descriptive research of influencers in Serbia was conducted, with a selection of the best ones, according to the criteria and nominations at the national competition for the best SMIs in Serbia. This paper presents the analysis of the most influential Serbian SMIs according to key parameters of success on different social networks.

In the second phase, this research analyzed the effectiveness of SMIs from the users' perspective, using a quantitative approach and the Ohanian credibility 15-items scale, in order to measure the level of user trust in the most popular SMIs in Serbia. The sample consists of representatives of the identified primary target group of the mentioned influencers. Primary data were collected through an online questionnaire.

### Results and conclusions

This paper reviews the effectiveness of social media influencers in Serbia by industry in which they have the biggest influence, category of influence and primary target audience. On the other hand, the research results indicate the real level of trust the audience has, measured in terms of trustworthiness, expertise and attractiveness of SMIs in Serbia. For the public relations theory and practice, these results mean that influencers, as users per se, could be an effective channel of PR communication in social media and thus rebuild the trust of the audience.

### Practical and social implications

Aside from addressing the paucity of research on the significance of SMIs for public relations, this paper signals important managerial implications for communication strategies in particular industries. The initial results from this study can help organizations to profile the most effective (i.e. most trustworthy) influencers and the most influenced audience.

### Keywords

*social media, influencers, trust, public relations*

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# Exploring profit organisations' alignment of CSR activities with disaster risk reduction initiatives in a cross-national comparative study

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## Introduction and purpose of the study

Governments are under pressure to provide sufficient services and security to their citizens, while communities face seemingly increasing man-made and natural disasters. According to the UNISDR (United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction) the cost of climate-related disasters over the last two decades was more than \$2.25 trillion, with more than 6 600 such disasters globally (AFP, 2018).

The suggestion is that profit organisations can contribute to alleviating some of these difficulties in both developing and developed countries. As Duff (2017) explained, there is a need for shared responsibility between business and government that could be achieved through actions like CSR.

This begs the question: What is the view on and current practice relating to organisations aligning their CSR activities with DRR initiatives? In order to explore this question, the study will gather data on (i) organisations' conceptualisation of and motivation for the activities and outcomes of their CSR initiatives, (ii) their view on their role in DRR, (iii) current practice on aligning CSR and DRR.

## Literature review

The study is framed within the:

- legitimacy theory that focuses on the social contract between an organisation and society,
- stakeholder relationship theory that highlights the interdependent, mutually beneficial relationships that need to be maintained between the organisation and stakeholders, and

- DRR theory that examines the social, economic and environmental impacts of disasters and interventions to limit risk and increase community resilience.

From a disaster management perspective the role of the private sector is being more closely examined, specifically within the tourism industry where CSR programmes are increasingly aligned to DRR efforts (Dobie et al 2018).

In addition, one could consider the reasons why companies would be involved in activities to support DRR efforts as understood from the legitimacy and stakeholder relationship management theories. Organisations' involvement can be due to legislation or an industry charter, due to pressure group or NGO actions, as an effort to create beneficial stakeholder relationships and showing good corporate citizenship, driven by the promise of a more positive reputation, or seeking legitimacy and self-protection. Some organisations even argue that their efforts are driven by their contribution to truly alleviate developmental problems.

Some global guidelines exist that could guide organisation's efforts to be more aligned with DRR efforts. For instance the UN Sustainable Development Goals focus on increased community resilience. More specifically the fourth priority of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction highlights the need to "build back better" during the recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction phases of a disaster. This implies that assistance measures must be focussed on being sustainable for the community and creates more resilience.



## Methodology

This exploratory study is based on a cross-national comparative study, with the aim of finding data that transcends national and cultural boundaries, and that can compare and give insight into the topic of investigation. The study aims to compare data from the UK with that of South Africa, to understand and gain greater insight into the phenomenon, and identify avenues for further research.

The study will make use of semi-structured interviews with 10 specifically selected communication practitioners in each country. The practitioners will be selected based on their knowledge of the subject matter and experience in the field.

## Results and conclusions

Preliminary findings suggest that company reputation and survival are key considerations when considering societal contributions, where organisations seek to balance the outcome of the contributions to benefit society and themselves. Organisations also seem keen to align their efforts with development goals, but are less considerate of their contribution to DRR.

Being exploratory, this study is limited in terms of its geographical reach, although including the views of developed and developing countries. Future studies could expand on the investigation by expanding the sampling frame, adding an element of quantitative research, and furthering specific findings.

## Practical and social implications

The study provides evidence for the need for private and governmental sectors to combine efforts on DRR activities that create community resilience through focussed CSR activities. The findings can induce organisations to be considered in aligning CSR activities with DRR efforts for a greater impact and societal legitimacy.

## Keywords

*DRR, profit organisations, CSR*

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# Engaging the press - A grounded theory approach

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## Introduction and purpose of the study

The concepts of “engagement” and “co-creation” have attracted significant research interest in both public relations (PR) studies and relationship marketing studies in the recent years. In public relations, co-creation is the “most striking trend in public relations over the past 20 years” and “centre of public relations research” (Botan & Taylor, 2004, p.651-652). This study explores press engagement strategies from a journalist’s perspective. In relationship marketing studies, customer engagement is one of the top research priorities in Marketing Science Institute (2014-2016). Yet, we rarely see a cross-over between concepts of such a similar nature. The rapidly evolving changing nature of the press room due to the introduction of technology has enabled news to be reported on a 24 x 7 schedule. Both the profit and time pressure of the press room has driven immense pressure for journalists to generate news at an unprecedented volume and speed (Lewis, Williams & Franklin, 2008). Journalists relies heavily on content provided by public relations practitioners. Studies have shown that PR goes way beyond agenda setting with a staggering 60% of news derived from PR-related materials and the trend is rising (Lewis et al., 2008, p.14).

## Literature Review

In public relations studies, a majority of engagement studies stem from three main public relations theories; first, the organization-public relations (OPR) studies discuss the formation of relations in public relations setting. OPR focuses on the antecedents, followed by maintenance or cultivation strategies, then resultant

outcome of the relationship (e.g. Grunig & Huang, 2000). The second public relations stream is the Excellence theory (Grunig, 2006). It focuses on the two-way symmetrical model of communication to develop a mutually beneficial relationship between the public relations practitioner and its stakeholders. Third, the Intereffication Model (IE) (Bentele & Nothhaft, 2008), in which relationships between press-public relations practitioners is co-dependent, mutually influential and co-oriental.

In relationship marketing studies, the concept of engagement was formed under the service-dominant (S-D) logic by Vargo and Lusch. S-D concept stipulates that customers are active co-creators of value. Stemming from this logic, scholars started to discuss the concept of *customer engagement* as a multidimensional psychological state through episodic social exchanges between two parties with the aim of achieving a common goal (Brodie, Hollebeek, Juric, & Ilic, 2011).

## Methodology

Given the significance of the influence of PR on news output and the need to conceptualize the concept of press engagement, this study aims to bridge the gap between the two disciplines by using grounded theory approach (Strauss and Corbin, 1990) to study and conceptualize press engagement behaviour. A snowballing technique was employed to recruit journalists as participants of this study. Eighteen journalists working in Hong Kong were interviewed from October 2016 to January 2017. The scripts of the eighteen journalists were analysed using Strauss and

Corbin (1990, p. 253-255) seven criteria for empirical grounding and adequacy respectively. The statements were analysed line-by-line, categorized using open coding system, followed by axial coding, and then selective coding to derive the themes that emerge out of the grounded theory analysis.

### Results and conclusions

Nine axial coded categories emerged. Negatives of PR, reasons for using PR materials, professionalism, firm type, contact modes of PR, media catching, time, E-news nature and PR expected outcomes. From results of the axial coding, the following press engagement themes were derived from results of this study: role reinforcement, responsiveness, social justice and segregation.

Evidence showed that press engagement strategies are unexplored phenomena in both public relations and relationship marketing studies (Lee, Yip, & Chan, 2018). The theme, role reinforcement and responsiveness provide further empirical support to Grunig and Bentele's cultivation strategy (2006) and Intereffication model (2008). Two new strategic themes, social justice and segregation, emerge as news press engagement constructs that journalists value as good press engagement strategies. This study provides qualitative data support to conceptualize the constructs for scale development and further empirical studies.

### Practical and social implications

Press engagement strategies help PR practitioner to apply better press engagement strategies when working with journalists, in order to derive beneficial press outcomes such as higher press coverage, better handling of bad press and crisis situations, if the proper press engagement strategies are deployed. This study provides early evidence of a multidimensional "press engagement" measure aiming to provide support for firms to systemically employ press engagement strategies in managing media relations.

### Keywords

*Press Engagement strategy, Symmetrical model, Organization-Public Relationships, Excellence theory, Intereffication model.*

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# Importance of trust for influencer-follower relationship on Instagram: The UAE perspective

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## Introduction and purpose

Development of social networks established new channels and introduced an entirely new category of relevant message holders: Instagram influencers as opinion leaders (Marwick, 2015). Instagram influencers are used in numerous campaigns to convey the message to their followers. However, if there is no trust between influencer and follower, it is unlikely that follower will be transformed into buyer or brand advocate, take the desired action, or convey the message further. In the United Arab Emirates, the trend of involving influencers in the campaigns is especially noticeable on Instagram, which globally became the most-used platform in various industries (Casaló et al., 2018).

The purpose of this study is to identify factors relevant for the followers in the process of establishing trust between Instagram influencer and follower, to identify any country-specific factors related to the United Arab Emirates, and to identify the applicability of conclusions of other researches in the UAE.

## Literature review

Broad global prevalence of the Internet and related technologies significantly increased the role of opinion leaders in the societies (Turcotte et al., 2015), as well as the research related to this field. Key opinion leaders are important sources of advice for consumers. The significance of Instagram to spread the message is increasing: Instagram is the most used platform by opinion leaders in the fashion industry worldwide, and this trend is expected to continue (Casaló et al., 2018). Despite the broad use of Instagram in the governmental, business and industry campaigns, related academic

research is still limited (Djafarova & Rushforth, 2017).

By now, trust and relationship management on Instagram were mostly explored from the company perspective. Only a limited number of academic studies related to the exploration of trust in the context of an Instagram influencer-follower relationship exist. Moreover, there are no country-specific researches related to the United Arab Emirates that address this topic.

## Methodology

A survey has been conducted with 345 Instagram users - UAE residents aged above 18. An online questionnaire has been created to explore the Instagram-use habits of the participants along with their level of trust in Instagram influencers and the factors impacting their trust. Research instrument is based on:

- Questionnaire developed by Casaló et al. (2018) which compiles multiple measurement scales adapted from previous studies;
- General Trust subscale from the Couch Trust Inventory (Couch, Adams & Jones, 1996);
- Modified Key Opinion Leaders questionnaire.

The survey has been offered in English, and Arabic language and participants were able to choose the language before accessing the survey. Having an active Instagram account was an eligibility criterion for participation in the study; overall 12% of the participants stated that they do not have an Instagram account, so they were not included in the final sample.

### Results and conclusions

Findings of the research show that influencer-follower interaction is among the critical factors for building trust. The followers want to be assured that the real person is behind a specific account. Also, the findings of the study correlate with the findings of Casaló et al. (2018) considerations related to the trust-building.

The review demonstrated the existence of three groups of Instagram opinion leaders in the UAE: country leadership, celebrities, and instafamous (Marwick, 2015). Moreover, the findings of the study correlate with Djafarova & Rushforth (2017) conclusions regarding the importance of building trust for the acceptance of online celebrity endorsements.

Results and conclusions of the study, due to sample limitations, should be considered indicative and may be confirmed with the larger sample. Moreover, in future research, it should be identified if there are any differences between the local and expatriate population regarding the perception of the importance of various trust-building factors in the influencer-follower relationship.

### Practical and social implications

The findings of the study help the communication practitioners to understand what characterizes trust-building between Instagram followers and influencers

in the UAE. Also, the modified scale can be used to assess the influencer-follower relationships in other regions, and on other social networks.

### Keywords

*Trust, Relationship Management, Social Media, Instagram, UAE*

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# Effects of Automated Communication and Transparency in PR on Trust in Organizations

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## Purpose of the study

The increasing use of automated communication in various types of organizations like enterprises, government offices or NPOs is one of the core challenges for communication professionals in the field of PR. Until now, academic research discusses the implementation of data-driven PR in practice little, although there are several consequences for communication practitioners and the organization itself (Wiencierz & Röttger, 2017). Due to progress in artificial intelligence, algorithms, automation and bots will become an essential part of PR - being prepared could be one of the main tasks in the next years. Potential fields of application are relatively unknown by now and have to be discerned on an organizational level weighing up positive and negative outcomes (Galloway & Swiatek, 2018). Communication between an organization and its relevant stakeholders changes immensely, when algorithms take over tasks like content creation, distribution and interaction with humans (Wiesenberg et al., 2017). This upcoming phenomenon of an algorithm- and non-human-based communication has to be considered urgently in terms of trust and transparency, both essential constructs in PR research. Communicating transparently can lead to higher levels of perceived trustworthiness, as studies show (Schnackenberg & Tomlinson, 2016), and is even more relevant when algorithms produce and post content on social media. Hence, this study deals with the following research question:

Does the transparent labeling of automated strategic communication (in social networks) have effects on the perceived trustworthiness of an organization?

## Literature review

Trust serves as a valuable basis for organizations to be able to maintain or expand their scope of actions with the goal to increase the organizational effectiveness and legitimacy. Under conditions of uncertainty and vulnerability, a trustor assumes that a trustee acts in his interests by estimating the antecedents ability, benevolence and integrity (Mayer et al., 1995). In PR, transparent communication is often regarded as "essential to the trust stakeholders place in organizations" (Schnackenberg & Tomlinson, 2016, p. 1784). This leads to the theoretical assumption that the perceived degree of transparency determines the perceived trustworthiness of an organization. Therefore, researchers state that instead of seeing transparency as a dimension of trustworthiness, it is an antecedent and therefore two separate theoretical constructs (Schnackenberg & Tomlinson, 2016). It is of high importance for the trust in

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organizations - provided by their external stakeholders - to label algorithm-based communication in a transparent manner. In accordance with the ethical PR principles formulated by the PRSA and other numerous (inter-)national ethic codes, the main dimensions of transparency - disclosure of information, clarity and accuracy - must also be applied to the labeling of strategic communication efforts as being algorithm-based.



### Methodology

A representative online social survey will be conducted in March 2019 (N = 1000) and is administered in cooperation with an opinion research institute. In the experimental design, participants will be asked to see a Facebook post of a non-profit organization. The transparency of the stimuli varies between algorithm-based and human-based communication indicating that the post is either written and distributed by an algorithm or a human. Measures in the empirical online survey include inter alia the perceived level of transparency, the general trust propensity, the perceived trustworthiness of the specific organization and socio-demographic characteristics of the participants.

### Expected Results

Since there is very limited knowledge and nearly no empirical studies in this field, it will be interesting to see how transparent labeled automated strategic communication is interrelated to the perceived trustworthiness of the organizations. Moreover, it is assumed that there are significant differences in the perception of algorithm- and human-based communication.

### Consequences and Implications for Public Relations

Trust is a highly fragile and uncertain construct worth of protection. Before the implementation of automated communication in PR practice increases, it is necessary to gain sufficient knowledge about the consequences

on the perceived trustworthiness of an organization. By now neither science nor PR communication professionals know what stakeholders' attitude is towards communication with algorithms instead of humans - this study is a first starting point contributing to the existing research gap.

### Keywords

*Automated Communication; Trust; Transparency*

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# How PR professionals can survive in the age of Artificial Intelligence and Automation

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## Introduction and purpose of the study

Trust and credibility of corporations is nowadays at stake if they fail to adapt to a new digital reality and to have a vision for the future. Artificial intelligence (AI) and automation are currently changing human life and having a great implication for public relation professionals: customer service, press releases, and news articles are currently being done by AI. This research aims at understanding the impact of AI and automation on PR professionals and what skills they need to face its impacts.

## Literature review

The literature review focuses on the origins of AI and automation since its conceptualization until its current development and implementation; this is followed by the review of its current impact on organisations, the present concerns about job losses or displacements due to automation and the current impact of AI and automation in the role of communications professional's through ongoing studies about the digital media literacy of the practitioners and the actual autonomous decision-making technology. This leads to finally explore what is being said, forecast and reported by experts about the likely effects of AI and automation in the near future and what are the potential skills that Communication and PR practitioners will need.

## Methodology

The research approach is qualitative, involving methodological triangulation and consisting of two data sources based on primary research and one based on secondary research.

1. Consulting rounds with experts using the Delphi method. A structured and interactive process to collect opinions based on the experiences and judgments of experts until consensus. This technique is an intuitive methodology for organising and sharing expert forecasts about the future and often used when there is incomplete knowledge about a phenomenon. 7 international experts participated (selected by their qualities in Communication, PR, education, and technology).
2. An online focus group with Communication and PR students gathering their opinions and views about the future of the profession. 7 international students participated (currently studying Communication and/or PR).
3. Secondary research was done thorough summary and analysis of available research from studies and news about the categories mentioned in the literature review.

## Results and conclusions

Impacts of AI and automation on PR practice The likely impacts of AI and automation on the PR practice are

on the one hand the enhancing of efficiency, and productivity, freeing practitioners to focus on the creative side, strategy, and analytical thinking. On the other hand, repetitive and low-level jobs could be lost, being higher position jobs or those involving creativity and decision making harder to automate.

## Skills needed

Soft skills will be the main priority to stay relevant in the profession because those will be the ones harder to replicate by AI and automation. Uniquely human qualities like emotional intelligence, good judgement, and ethics will be always needed.

Technical skills. Emerging media expertise of young people is overstated and over-assumed. Universities are failing to integrate technology and the exponential acceleration of technology means learning and constantly re-skilling must be a lifelong pursuit.

That means that in order to build trust and credibility of corporations in the age of AI and automation, two types of training are needed; the first is to gather experience with the current AI and automated tools to understand their benefits and limitations, and the second is to focus on developing human qualities that AI can't replicate.

Recommendation The first advice is to raise awareness about the impact of AI and automation in the profession. Secondly, traditional training and courses need to be updated by integrating a digital media workflow in collaboration with technical experts.

Finally, it is recommended to focus on training related to data analysis, digital marketing, and social media management while emphasising ethical responsibility and soft skills development.

Soft Skills	Technical Skills	Training
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open mind</li> <li>• Relationship building</li> <li>• Adaptation</li> <li>• Emotional intelligence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data analysis</li> <li>• Digital marketing</li> <li>• Social media commercial tools</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integrated workflow and collaboration with technical experts</li> <li>• Data analysis and management</li> <li>• Ethical responsibility</li> </ul>

Practical and social implications The outcomes of this research will be valuable to help current and future Communication and PR practitioners, as well as organisations and universities related to the field, to be one step ahead of AI and automation, being aware of its current and near-future impacts while providing a recommendation about the training and skills that are needed to survive in this new digital age and be able to build trust and credibility in corporations.

## Keywords

artificial intelligence, automation, skills, trust



# Trust me, I am a social media manager! Public sector's trust work and reputation in the age of misinformation

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## Introduction and purpose of the study

Paper aims at investigating the role of social media managers in public sector organizations as key-actors in the so-called "trust work". With this word, we refer to the work performed by public officials to overcome barriers to trust in both interpersonal and institutional relationships with citizens (Corbett & Le Dantec, 2018), in the specific digital environment.

In a challenging scenery, an age of distrust and misinformation, failure of "public trust" in institutions can have serious consequences (Warren et al., 2014): damaged reputation, ungovernable complaints, civic and political disaffection, etc.

At the same time, there aren't useful shortcuts to manage or prevent these consequences and to build institutional trustworthiness, even if social media adoption is often considered the easiest mean to overcome organizational limitations.

On the contrary, trust is not a built-in attribute of technology itself, but a design value in digital civics (Corbett & Le Dantec, 2018). It's necessary to investigate how trust works in the relationships citizens/institutions, developing it as a process, daily performed.

Thus, in a world with low trust degree towards "generalized others" (Edelman, 2018), we argue the possibility to gain trust and citizens' propensity to trust others, through the "access points". Indeed, following Giddens (1990) definition, "access points" are points of

connection between lay publics and the representatives of abstract systems. In our study, we consider social media managers as "access points" because they represent the connective bridge between institutions and lay publics; they usually can play a pivotal role in managing internal and external relationships. As any access point, they also represent junctions at which trust can be maintained or built up.

The research questions that guide our study are:

- Is trust work a design value in social media managers' perceptions?
- Are social media managers aware to represent "hubs of trust" between citizens and institutions?
- How do they play the role of trust mediators to increase positive organizational outcomes? Which PR strategies are intentionally implemented to manage trust on social media?

## Literature review

The study can be framed within "public sector communication" (Canel & Luoma-aho, 2018), focusing on the impact of social media on communicative processes and practices between organizations and citizens, but also on trust propensity (Bertot et al., 2010; Porumbescu, 2016); on civic engagement (Harode-Rosario, 2018); on fostering greater government accountability, transparency and responsiveness (Picazo-Vela et al., 2012). Scholars have started to investigate social media use by public sector

organizations focusing on PR models and strategies (Lovari & Valentini, 2019), highlighting the processes of institutionalization of these platforms in governments (Mergel, 2013) or listening to digital publics' needs and expectations (Lovari & Parisi, 2015). In this framework, despite few studies (Gálvez-Rodríguez et al., 2018), little research has been carried on the strategic role of social media managers in public organizations.

### Methodology

The study will be carried out in Spring 2019, adopting a qualitative approach, using in-depth interviews with a selected panel of PR practitioners managing social media channels on behalf of 20 Italian municipalities. The rationale of using in-depth interviews is related to the need to further investigate dimensions and collect insights that cannot be easily analyzed using other methods.

The sample will be selected according to the latest studies on the efficacy of social media communications in Italy (PASocial, 2018). Interviews will investigate whether social media managers adopt specific communication strategies and tactics to develop trust, stimulate engagement and to nurture effective relations to re-connect with digital publics. The last part of the interview, will focus on how social media managers deal with misinformation that daily challenge municipalities' credibility and reputation.

### Results and conclusions

Data will be available and elaborated before the

conference. Findings will help researchers to investigate the strategic role of social media managers in public sector organizations and their function as possible trigger for developing trust toward such organizations.

### Practical and social implications

Implications for public sector communication and for the evolving role of digital communication professionals working for municipalities will be discussed.

### Keywords

*Public sector communication, social media managers, trust work, communication strategies, reputation.*

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# Is The Barometer Broken?

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## Introduction and purpose

The publication of the Edelman Trust Barometer each spring prompts seasonal soul-searching about loss of trust and what public relations can do to remedy it. The mainstream view in our discipline appears to be that trust is falling, this is a serious problem for organisations and society, and that better public relations is the answer.

There is however a growing body of opinion suggesting that this paradigm is not very useful; that 'trust' is not a very meaningful proposition; that it is not as 'broken' as we believe, and that public relations is not the answer. The evidence on this side of the argument is mounting, and as a profession public relations has not yet taken sufficient account of it. If we wish to act ethically and effectively, we need to examine closely whether we are continuing to operate a failed intellectual model that cannot deliver positive results for our clients or for society.

I therefore argue that public relations needs to answer three critical questions:

1. Much of our professional effort is devoted to analysing levels of trust, commenting on apparently falling trust, and planning campaigns and strategies to restore trust. There is no question that this is big business for our sector. The problem is that if we are to believe the Edelman Trust Barometer, every year, while PR fees go up, trust comes down. We need to ask ourselves – are we part of the

problem? Should we consider giving less weight to 'trust' and more to concepts that we largely ignore, such as 'scepticism', 'fidelity' (Steve Wilson), or even just 'not being shit' (Tom Goodwin).

2. How sure are we that increasing transparency improves trust? I will set out examples to suggest that far from improving trust, transparency generally erodes it, so that if our intention is to increase trust, improving transparency is exactly the wrong thing to do. Also our 'analysis' of data and the narratives we create to accompany our transparent disclosures all too often have a 'lulling' effect, leaving our publics vulnerable to 'Black Swans' which shatter trust and highlight the limitations of just 'telling it how it is'.
3. If venture capitalists invested \$4bn in trustless systems in 2018, why is public relations still investing so much effort in trust-building? While public relations remains largely focused on a discourse about authenticity and personalisation, much of business is looking in an entirely different direction. Regardless of whether you believe blockchain is a useful answer to most questions, we should at least consider the meaning and value of 'trust' in a future society where much of the infrastructure is built on the concept of 'trustlessness' and 'depersonalisation.'

## Keywords

*Trust, Trustless, Fidelity, Self-Deception, Scepticism*



# “Vision, Passion, and Care:” The Impact of Executive Leadership Communication on Employee Trust and Support for Organizational Change

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## Introduction and purpose of the study

In the increasingly versatile and fast-evolving business environment, organizational leaders face immense challenges to gain or maintain employee trust in the organization, especially during turbulent times such as a company-wide change. The issue is more pressing today considering the growing global concern that public trust towards institutions is eroding (Edelman, 2018). In fact, change management and communication scholars agree that trust and leadership are fundamental elements for the success of change processes. Without employee trust, it is hard to get everyone to work toward the common goal or to generate needed support for the change initiative. Leadership, likewise, has been suggested as a critical determinant of successful change (Gill, 2002) in that it develops vision, strategy, and culture for change, and motivates employees in change engagement.

Organizational leaders cannot function to their fullest capacity without effective communication. The crucial role of communication during organizational change has been long recognized, as it reduces change-related uncertainty, induces trust, and facilitates change implementation (Men & Bowen, 2017). However, despite the wide discussions of leadership, communication,

and trust issues during organizational change across management and communication arenas, few scholarly attempts have been undertaken, particularly from the executive leadership communication perspective, to examine how top-level leaders should communicate to generate employee trust and garner employee support for change. Thus, to fill the research gap, this study investigates the contribution of executive leadership communication during planned organizational change.

## Literature Review

In the change communication context, although a bulk of studies have examined how various leadership styles, such as transformational leadership, visionary leadership, and authentic leadership, contribute to the success of change processes, most of these studies focused on the role of supervisory leadership. Few have taken the strategic leadership perspective to investigate how communications from executive leaders may affect employees' change-related attitudes and behaviors. Further, in the public relations domain, despite the wide recognition of CEOs' symbolic and communicative roles as corporate representations, there has been a lack of empirical evidence on how top executives' specific communication behaviors affect

employee/organizational outcomes, especially during change, when guidance and involvement from the top is expected and needed.

Therefore, taking an interdisciplinary approach, this study draws upon theories and literature from leadership, change management, and public relations, and intends to explore how executive leadership communication could nurture employee trust and impact employee change outcomes, including openness to change and behavioral support for change. Executive leadership communication encompasses three behavioral dimensions: envisioning (i.e., communication about vision), energizing (i.e., communication about passion), and enabling (i.e., communication about care and support) (cf. Nalder & Tushman, 1990). Employee trust is defined as employees' level of confidence in and willingness to open themselves to the organization (Hon & J. Grunig, 1999) during change. Employee openness to change involves positive affect toward the change outcomes and the willingness to support the proposed change, and behavioral support for change is characterized by employee cooperation and championship (i.e., promoting the change).

## Methodology

An online survey was conducted in August 2018 with 439 U.S. employees whose company had gone through a company-wide change in the past two years and the respondents had experienced the change. Respondents were selected randomly with the aid of Survey Sampling International from various industries. Structural equation modeling was utilized for data analysis.

## Results and conclusions

Results showed that executive leadership

communication characterized by envisioning, energizing, and enabling during change positively affected employee trust toward the organization, employee openness to change, and behavioral support for change. Trust played a significant role in boosting employee openness to change, which in turn, contributed to employee behavioral support for change. Additionally, employee trust partially mediated the impact of executive leadership communication on employee change outcomes. In other words, when executives convey and demonstrate behaviors to symbolize a compelling vision for change, express passion, energy, excitement, and confidence toward change, and show willingness to listen, understand, empathize, and communicate care and individual support for employees, employees tend to trust the organization more, which in turn, leads to enhanced openness to the change and behavioral support for change.

## Practical and social implications

The findings provide important practical insights for organizational leaders and change communication managers regarding how to involve top executives in the change communication process to boost employee trust and generate attitudinal and behavioral support for change. Essentially, executives need to be equipped with a strategic communication mindset, communicating vision, passion, and care, not only to motivate employees to embrace change, but also to share feelings, empathize, sympathize, and convey the idea of "we're in this together." In sum, effective executive leadership communication is fundamental for garnering trust and driving success for change.

## Keywords

*executive leadership, communication, employee trust, change outcomes*

# In science we trust? Reputation as leverage to engagement with science

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## Introduction and purpose of the study

If one does understand Public Relations in science as the strategic function responsible for managing the trust portfolio of the scientific endeavour (Borchelt & Nielsen, 2014), it seems only natural that engagement with science should be at the forefront of scientific and technological organisations communication strategies. Aiming to be more a conceptual article than an empirical one, the work to be presented started however, from a reflexion upon a quite precise organization and the challenges it faces in order to build and rebuild, not only its reputation, but also the reputation of the scientific endeavour.

## Literature review

Trust in science seems to have been quivered in the recent years as we observe growing beliefs in affirmations that are contrary to scientific consensus and fuelled by phenomena such as *fake news* or *post-truth*. This growth in scepticism towards science should be a concern for scientific and technological organisations not only from a standpoint of survival – because support to and trust in their scientific developments ultimately allows them to keep carrying their activities – but perhaps more importantly, trust in their activity will have effects in the levels of engagement in society with scientifically supported knowledge.

Considering the innate uncertainty of science, questions such as transparency or consensus (cf. Osman, Heath & Löfsted, 2017; Chinn, Lane & Hart, 2018) are not without importance to the development of communication strategies that aim to increase engagement with science. If the evolution of science and technology is the main goal of scientific and technological organizations it is expected that they take part in the public debates

those raise. It is in the public space of these debates that science communication must strive to inform the decision making process by establishing relations based on trust - from trustworthy organizations - that can help raise the understanding of the scientific uncertainty and controversies that sometimes it raises (Fischhoff, 2013).

## Methodology

From a methodological point of view and all along an extensive literature review an exploratory case study was constructed (Yin, 2003). If the purpose of a case study is to allow a description of the phenomena in their context in this special case, an exploratory one, it was meant precisely to help the researchers to understand the better way to develop a further examination, both at a theoretical, as well as at an empirical level, of the connections between the concept or trust, trust in science together with trust in scientific and technological institutions, and the communication strategies of those institutions. Case Studies are increasingly a method used in research processes where a biunivocal relationship is sought between practice and theory, and especially in the area of Public Relations (Corporate Communications). Its usefulness has been defended both as an instrument for reflection within organizations and as material for analysis in academia (Eiró-Gomes and Duarte, 2008). Interviews were promoted with different key actors and met all requirements both from the point of view of ethical issues (eg. issues of informed consent) and from the point of view of research validity (triangulation). The interviews were recorded and transcribed in full. It is intended with transcription (unlike for example what would be expected if the option were the one of the paraphrase or the summary) to preserve the sense of the speaker, that is to say, the transcription allows not

to make interpretations previous to the analysis, thus maintaining a greater proximity to the original data. Beyond the interviews, data were collected through documentary analysis of available material on the internet as well as public records from the institution. Afterwards authors proceeded to a qualitative content analysis (Berger, 2014).

### Results and conclusions

Trust is an attitude that we have towards people to whom we hope will be trustworthy, where trustworthiness is a property, not an attitude. Trust and trustworthiness are therefore distinct although, ideally, those whom we trust will be trustworthy, and those who are trustworthy will be trusted. It is in this

relation that we claim for scientific and technological organizations the responsibility of striving towards higher levels of support and engagement with science.

### Practical and social implications

With the work developed here, we hope to contribute to a broader reflexion on the role of science communication in scientific and technological organizations and to the widespread support of a strategic assumption of communication in these organizations.

### Keywords

*Strategic Communication, Science, Trust*

# Individual Reputation and Organizational Reputation

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## Introduction and Purpose of the Study

The study of personal reputation only recently gained space and visibility in the field of organizational studies. For this, much progress has been made in organizational reputation, which structurally similar in genesis, provides the guidelines and identifies similar processes on how organizational actors develop and use individual reputation to have influence and maximize their effectiveness (Tsui, 1984; Ferris, Blass, Douglas, Kolodinsky & Treadway 2003).

Following the challenges of literature, the main objective of this research is to understand how personal reputation influences organizational reputation, predicting the mediating effect of the organizational trust.

## Literature Review

The research developed in this area has been shown the valuable benefits and individual results of positive personal reputation leading the organizational actors to invest considerable effort in their building and maintenance.

According to Zinko, Ferris, Humphrey, Meyer, and Amie (2012), personal reputation is the guiding thread that contributes to greater power, more autonomy, career advancement and gives the opportunity to signal key information to audiences. Ferris, Blass, Douglas, Kolodinsky & Treadway (2003) argue that positive personal reputation is an important currency that individuals can use to foster trust with new colleagues. However, despite the progress and the considerable investment, we have yet to fully understand the effects that individual reputation may have in organizations. That is to say, personal reputation scholars

acknowledge the value of organizations possessing individuals with but, to date, no existing theory ties the development of personal reputation and its benefits to that of the organization. Zinko and Rubin (2015) warn that, given the proximity of the concepts, it is urgent to determine to what extent personal reputation contributes to organizational reputation, evidencing the possibility of this relationship being mediated by a set of organizational attitudes such as trust. According to Konaklioglu and Devin (2015), although research establish an important link between reputation and trust, they do not completely characterize the reputation-trust relationship.

## Methodology

The present study is based on quantitative methodology, operationalized through the application of questionnaires to a sample of 150 employees provided by different work scenarios. These questionnaires were analyzed using the SEM - Structural Equation Model.

## Results and Conclusions

The results analyzed using the SEM - Structural Equation Model, confirmed the validity of the analysis model and the formulated research hypotheses.

In general terms, it can be perceived that the personal reputation can contribute directly and indirectly to the formulation of the organizational reputation, insofar as the organizational trust can be constituted as a mediating variable between personal reputation and the organizational reputation. Specifically, it became possible to conclude that the hypotheses initially formulated were confirmed. In this sense, the personal reputation of organizational actors is positively related to organizational reputation, since it influences the trust



that employees have in relation to the organization.

### **Practical and Social Implications**

In theoretical and practical terms, the results of this research may provide relevant contributions for raising the theoretical and idiosyncratic maturity of personal and organizational reputation concepts, and showing to what extent and through which means, namely effective communication policies, can contribute to reach some of the most valuable intangibles contemporary, such

as reputation and organizational trust. In addition, it becomes relevant to realize the impact that personal reputation may have on organizational reputation by promoting more effective organizational practices that promote greater trust of employees towards the organization.

### **Keywords**

*Personal Reputation, Organizational Reputation, Trust, Intangible Resources*



# Building Trust on Twitter in Healthcare: Content Analysis in Turkey and Slovenia

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## Introduction and purpose of the study

Public relations researchers have identified several attributes of communication and relational outcomes between organizations and publics. Four outcomes (trust, control mutuality, relational satisfaction and relational commitment) are the most widely accepted criteria to evaluate an organization's relationship with its publics (Ni and Wang 2011). While all organizations are striving to augment trust directed towards them, a bigger duty falls onto healthcare organizations, as individuals look to trust, as one of their primary expectations, healthcare organizations where they seek to get competent services. From a broader viewpoint, to trust the healthcare system is one of the primary public expectations in a country. Organizations mostly use social media tools to build trust on their publics. Twitter is one of the platforms appealing the widest masses. The purpose of this study is to unveil how health ministries of the two countries use twitter to build trust as government agencies obliged to communicate with publics.

## Literature review

Allowing for real time and sometimes two-way communication, Twitter serves as an efficient and effective communication tool by sharing information and building dialogic relationship. The use of twitter in the area of healthcare services is common worldwide. More than 75,000 healthcare professionals worldwide, comprised of physicians, pharmacist, nurses and

healthcare consultants, send 152,000 tweets per day. In fact, Twitter has grown by more than 500%, only 23 healthcare professionals signed up for this social media site when it was launched in 2006 (Goff et al., 2015). In a period during which health professionals commonly uses twitter, it is obvious that citizens have difficulties reaching reliable information, and for this reason health ministries should use this platform effectively. As governments across the world have decreased in perceived reliability and trust since the 1960's, they now need more stable and continuous tools to communicate with their citizens. In this context, many government agencies are attempting to use social media tools to communicate with the public. One method of enhancing people's trust in their government is to enhance their faith in the performance of the core institutions of the government. This causes more open and transparent governments systems, and more efficient service delivery, which assists in restoring trust (Kim et al., 2015).

## Methodology

Kent and Taylor (1998) proposed dialogic strategies that are resourceful and effective for creating dialogic communication via the Internet: (a) ease of interface (b) conversation of visitors, (c) generation of return visits, (d) provision of useful information and (e) creation of dialogical loop. Twitter is able to provide all these conditions. In this paper, twitter accounts of Turkish and Slovenian Health Ministries will be analyzed during 2018-2019. The period will be selected six months

from June 1, 2018 until April 30, 2019 by using content analysis. In this examination, the method suggested by Park et al., for coding will be used:

**Descriptive Variables and Twitter Features:** Each tweet will be coded for basic descriptive variables (date and time of the tweet, number of retweets republished by other users, and number of favorites the tweet received). The type of tweet will be coded in one of three ways to determine the level of originality or interactivity of the posted tweet, retweet, or reply. Each tweet also will be coded for the presence or absence of the Twitter features: hyperlinks, hashtags, photos and videos.

**Message Functions and Topics:** This study aims at effectuating a content analysis according to “four models” of Grunig and Hunt, in terms of efforts made to build communication with publics, while Park et al., look to message function and topics.

### Results and conclusions

This study will seek to find out how both countries' health ministries communicate with their publics to build trust, whether they mind interaction, and in

which topics they use twitter mostly. Limitation of the study is how the publics react to twitter messages is not examined. Analyzing tweets in a longer timeframe will be helpful in confirming this study's findings, and also this study is limited to publicly available tweets. Future studies should examine more organizations that are diverse in size and focus in order to further understand Twitter use in healthcare. With more focus on message effectiveness, further research can measure individuals' perceptions of the credibility, trust and usefulness of information from health ministries.

### Practical and social implications

This study will aim at revealing what kind of a road map both countries' health ministries follow, and how much importance they attach to interaction to build trust on their publics. It will also identify whether a noncompeting government agency mind it or not, while for-profit organizations are in immediate need to communicate with their publics.

### Keywords

*trust, twitter, ministry of health, Turkey, Slovenia*

# How to explain trust: An analysis of modern Norway

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## Introduction and purpose of the study

Why is there a higher degree of trust, both in institutions and in others (general social trust) in some countries, compared to that found in others?

In this article, we analyse the development of Norwegian society and democracy in the early twentieth century to find explanations for the high level of trust found in Norway today, compared to that found in other European countries.

Norway is characterized by a high degree of trust, both in institutions and within society in general. In common with other Scandinavian countries, Norway is often ranked at the top of lists comparing the level of trust. Our principal research question is the following: *In what ways can the development of Norwegian society in the early twentieth century account for the high level of trust in Norway today?*

## Literature review

Zmerli and Newton (2008) have demonstrated a robust and significant relationship between general social trust and trust in state institutions, as police and the judicial system. Further is economic and cultural equality correlated with trust. Furthermore, there is a correlation between economic and cultural equality and trust. There is also a possible correlation between political and bureaucratic transparency and the level of trust in governments. Corruption is one of the main factors that contributes to creating mistrust towards political and administrative institutions and their executives.

A high degree of trust facilitates less suspicions in social interaction between people. People are more willing to

trust significant possessions, secrets and valuables to others. Trust is therefore a necessary answer to the uncertainty of modern social life.

Current studies (Skirbekk & Skirbekk 2012) explain the high level of trust in Norway by referring to developments in the nineteenth century where civil society organisations pushed for a modernisation from the bottom up. Solutions to conflicts were mainly reached by debates and compromises, rather than violent clashes. Social, economic and democratic rights were expanded by the governing elite. This created civil trust in the government and in the legitimacy of the judicial system.

## Methodology

In this article, we analyse the development of early twentieth century Norway (and Scandinavia). Political, civil and democratic rights were expanded further. At the same time governments, no longer just representing the elite, laid a liberal foundation for economic growth, and a social distribution of wealth. This was, to a large extent the result of compromises between the social classes. Solution to conflicts were mainly found through parliamentary and corporative processes, and not by violent clashes and revolutionary upheavals. As long as social, economic and democratic rights were expanding, most people viewed national development as a shared project.

A fair and independent judicial system is also important for achieving a predictable society. The judicial system was fair in the sense that it treated all members of society equally, with a minimum of corruption. In addition, the monopoly of violence (the police) in Norway (and in other Scandinavian countries) is structured on the basis of consent (the Anglo-Saxon

model) rather than on force, making for a better (and more trusting) relationship between the state and the public.

Many of these factors stand out as being in contradiction to the development of many other modern European states. Primarily, we will compare historical developments in Norway with those in Italy and Spain; the latter countries were characterized by a much lower degree of trust in institutions and general social trust. We will also refer to developments in Denmark and Sweden in order to see how Norway may be compared to other Scandinavian countries that are also characterized by a high degree of both trust in institutions and general social trust.

## Results and conclusions

The following historical factors can go towards explaining a higher degree of trust in institutions and general trust within society in some countries, compared to that found in others:

- Compromises between the social classes
- Successive economic growth and distribution of wealth
- A functional representative and transparent democracy
- Political and social compromises through corporative and parliamentary processes
- An active and respected civil society
- A fair and independent judicial system

## Practical and social implications

These factors may be viewed as being important for developing trust within any given country and function as an explanation of why certain countries lack trust, both in institutions and social trust, which is a prerequisite for an effective and successful public relations.

## Keywords

*Trust, Norway, History, Scandinavia*

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# Public Relations Associations as Trustworthy Partners. The APCE Case Study

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## Introduction

The purpose of this article is to present an ongoing study that seeks to know in what manner the affiliate members of the Portuguese Association for Corporate Communication (APCE) trust in the organization to defend their interests and to stimulate a rigorous path for the profession.

Because there is a poor associative tradition in Portugal and many associations always struggled with lack of human resources and financing support, people normally did not take the associative work too serious. The associations would survive mostly with the help of a few strong headed volunteers that believed in their mission.

But during the last decades both civic and professional associations have made an effort to assure a more formal structure with full-time and specialized employees which allow them to have a more active role in the society and with its affiliates. This is the case of APCE.

So it would be great to find out what affiliate members now think of APCE and its commitment in establishing Corporate Communication and Public Relations as a critical success factor for companies.

Despite being an autonomous non-profit driven entity, independent and active for almost 30 years, APCE has overcome a lot of obstacles and has undergone many restructurings that resulted from the rethinking of its mission. But one of its most difficult challenges over the years has been the capacity of gaining trust from practitioners and academics in the aptitude of APCE to

represent them in their professional and research area.

APCE board of directors is now interested in promoting a certification process for public relations, communication managers and strategists in Portugal. For several years it has struggled with a lack of recognition of both the value and competences of these practitioners. The ambition for an accreditation or certification of some kind is a long time expectation of many professionals and academics. So the main question is: Do affiliate members trust APCE to lead a process of certification or accreditation of PR in Portugal?

## Literature review

Any study with the concept of trust is somehow problematic (Watson, 2004) because there are many definitions and consequently different forms of measuring it. So many scholars feel lost with the "lack of agreement on a suitable definition of the construct" (Hosmer, 1995, in Watson, 2004). At the same time there are many disciplines interested in trust research like psychology, political science, sociology, management, organizational studies, marketing and public relations. This study will be grounded in the public relations area.

It is not difficult to understand that in order to build good and beneficial relationships in a social system it is fundamental to be also able to build trust (Arrow, 1974, apud Blomqvist & Ståhle, 2011). So building trust is particularly important for organizations to reach their best potential. And because this is a study centred in the relationship between APCE and its associate members the analysis will be supported on the concept of trust that integrates the Guidelines for Measuring

Relationships in Public Relations by James Grunig and Linda Hon (1999). Here trust is seen as "one party's level of confidence in and willingness to open oneself to the other party" (Grunig & Hon, 1999:3).

## Methodology

The methodology that will be used is a questionnaire send out to the current list of affiliate members of APCE. There will be also made an interview to the 11 members of the board to question them about their perception of the level of trustworthiness of APCE.

## Results

The expected results should point to the recognition of the importance of communication professionals and Public Relations practitioners to improve their career by investing in knowledge and new skills through a certification process. The results could be an opportunity for Public Relations to be raised from its current position in Portugal and serve as an example to other countries.

## Implications

he associativism in the area of communication and PR should have as its mission the valorisation of the sector and the stimulation of the debate around its great tendencies, involving and uniting all the players in the improvement and recognition of this area, both professionally and academically. However, the role of these associations has not been enough to stimulate, improve and promote the sector in question (Sebastião, 2014). This study would represent a fresh dialogue within this sector and would set an agenda to improve the reputation of APCE. At the same time it would serve to direct the attention to its performance and its commitments to other sectors of Portuguese society as well as to Europe and the world, since the initiatives that this association is trying to implement are included in the development of the PR and in the relations established with other associations and similar organizations.

## Keywords

*Associativism; Trust; Trustworthiness; Public Relations; Certification*



# Should we invest in internal communication in order to build employees' trust? – The relationship between internal communication satisfaction and organizational trust

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## Introduction and purpose of the study

Researches imply that trust in institution, organizations, managers, colleagues, friends and in many other areas of work and life is declining worldwide. As communication is a basic human need, one of the questions that can be raised is whether we can build and maintain employees' trust in their organizations by improving internal communication processes. The study explores the relationship between internal communication satisfaction and organizational trust – precisely, the interrelationship between eight facets of internal communication satisfaction and five dimensions of organizational trust. Additionally, the potential effect, moderating or mediating role of trustfulness (the ability to trust other people) as a personality dimension is considered.

## Literature review

A substantial positive link between superior-subordinate communication and organizational trust was proven by Pincus, Knipp and Rayfield (1990). Mishra (2007) revealed that the richer communication flowing between both employees and management enhances feelings of trust between management and employees, and that the feelings of trust lead to a more

positive reputation of the firm. A research by Togna (2014) assessed communications strategies aimed at increasing employee organizational trust and disclosed that internal communication is effective in building trust. Jo and Shim (2005) found very strong positive relationship between relational communication and trusting relationships. However, there is a need for further and detailed exploration of the relationship between employees' satisfaction with internal communication and their trust in their employers.

## Methodology

The quantitative questionnaire-based field research was conducted, on a sample of employees with at least one year of work experience within the organization of employment, as we assumed it to be a needed characteristic for grasping internal communication channels and culture. For the assessment of the internal communication satisfaction we used the Internal Communication Satisfaction Scale – UPZIK developed by Tkalac Verčič, Pološki Vokić and Sinčić Ćorić (2009). Organizational trust was assessed using the scale developed by Shockley-Zalabak, Ellis and Winograd (2000). A personality dimension of trustfulness was measured through the agreeableness facet of NEO™



Personality Inventory-3.

### Results and conclusion

We expect the study to reveal the relationship between multi-dimensional internal communication satisfaction construct and its dimensions, and various types of employees' trust within organizations, as well as the intervening role of trustfulness as a personality trait. We also assume certain control variables, potentially the length of work for the current employer and hierarchical level, to have an effect on explored relationships.

### Practical and social implications

Our results suggest which internal communication

aspects, measured through eight internal communication satisfaction facets (satisfaction with feedback, satisfaction with communication with superiors, satisfaction with horizontal communication, satisfaction with informal communication, satisfaction with corporate information, satisfaction with communication climate, satisfaction with communication media and satisfaction with communication during meetings) should be improved in order to increase each of the five dimensions of organizational trust (competency, openness/honesty, concerns for employees, reliability and identification).

### Keywords

*internal communication, organizational trust, trust in top management, trust in leaders, trustfulness*

# The Paradoxical Nature of Trust: A Study of the Trust-Mistrust Continuum in Chinese Business

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## Introduction

A complex concept, trust contains both rational and idiosyncratic elements. This is particularly true in the context of business which depends on trust. And yet, the many disciplines that study trust lack a common interpretation of the concept. Echoing the notion that trust can only be understood in a unique context (Bohnet & Meier, 2005), we study it in the context of Chinese entrepreneurship. We explored how trust is interpreted from the standpoint of Chinese cultural conditioning, and how it manifests in the context of contemporary China.

## Conceptual Backdrop

For centuries, the Chinese have known how to manage paradoxes and have even thrived on them. Arguably, the Chinese ability to reconcile paradoxical propensities is one of their strongest cultural traits: they embrace paradoxes as inevitable and desirable, contrary to the prevalent negative perception of paradoxes in the West (Smith & Lewis, 2011). Crucial to China's transformation from being one of the world's poorest countries to becoming the world's second largest economy has been the ability of the Chinese to manage paradoxes: past versus present and future; centralized control versus decentralized freedom to compete; state-led management with market-based enterprise; top-down leadership versus a bottom up flow of ideas; opening up to the West versus retaining Chinese identity.

We explored the following research questions: How does Chinese ability to manage paradoxes reflected in government policies play out in other domains of life? Specifically, how do Chinese entrepreneurs interpret 'trust' in the challenging and ambiguous political and socio-economic context they operate in? What is the role of mistrust in reinforcing trust?

## Method and Context

We focus on entrepreneurs in China. Contrary to the widespread view that Chinese economic success is due to foreign investment and government infrastructure investment, Chinese success has largely been driven by entrepreneurship. Despite its ambiguous legal and political framework, China is hyper-entrepreneurial. Some of its startups, such as Alibaba or Huawei, are among the most successful in the world. Using qualitative interviewing with fifteen Chinese entrepreneurs, we attempt to decompose some aspects of this success and show how it is linked to the aforementioned Chinese ability to embrace paradoxes.

## Findings and Implications

We suggest that Chinese entrepreneurs interpret the concept of trust as falling on a trust-mistrust continuum. This includes their interpretation of the perceived trust placed in them by their stakeholders; or the trust they place in their network of "guanxi" seen as a web of connections and trading favors as a means to get support in an uncertain society and as a form of social investment (Wang & Lin, 2009). In China, many paradoxical tensions such as trusting in personal capabilities versus relying on networks or adhering to the law versus mistrusting the legal system are not seen as mutually exclusive. On the contrary, mistrust reinforces trust. Focusing only on a seemingly positive pole implies that the interrelationship between the positive pole and its opposite is not fully understood, leading to a negative reinforcing cycle. Embracing mistrust, on the other hand, as a core ingredient of trust helps to "construct a more workable certainty" for Chinese entrepreneurs (Lüscher & Lewis, 2008, p. 234). It also helps here to understand the idiosyncratic Chinese idea of reputation, which is contextual. Reputation is loosely translated as "face", with multifold interpretation of both "moral" or "social" face, one



representing the confidence of the society while the other indicates prestige and success.

A particularly fascinating example of how our argument plays out is the trust that the Chinese place in the strictly government-controlled social media platform, WeChat. From a messaging app launched in 2011, WeChat has become a complete digital eco-system that has transformed life in China. Today, it is hard to imagine life and business without it. The trust the Chinese place in WeChat is the envy of its peers: unlike its Western counterparts, WeChat has managed to persuade most consumers to link their credit cards to the application. Behind this digital transformation is strict government control. Mistrust in the government results in trust in WeChat; and, conversely, mistrust in WeChat drives trust in the government. Understanding the trust-mistrust continuum could help to enhance business interactions across cultures as well as to inform policy making.

### Keywords

trust-mistrust continuum, China, entrepreneurship

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# Hot Yoga in Hot Water

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## Introduction

Yoga is a practice associated with self-discipline and peace and can be traced back over 5000 years. There have been many who have brought yoga to the west and left their mark, but no one quite like Bikram Choudhury. Choudhury built a yoga empire by moving to California, trademarking his name, registering a copyright on his sequence of postures, and franchising his Bikram brand across the globe. When allegations of sexual battery culminated and multiple civil lawsuits were filed against the famed spiritual guru by students, franchise owners, and his own staff, it was more than Choudhury's image that was called into question. The very identity of yoga was affected, and the reputational crisis that ensued continues to have an impact on the yoga community across the world.

## Purpose

The fame that Choudhury has relished over the years has placed high visibility on the practice and business of yoga. The ramifications of Choudhury's reputational losses go beyond his personae, beyond his 720 yoga studios, beyond the industry, and moves into the very identity of yoga. The purpose of this study is to analyze the communication tactics employed by the Bikram Corporation throughout this crisis, and the impact it had on its stakeholders, other yoga businesses and the industry writ large.

## Literature review

The literature review for this study will look at Public Relations scholarship in the realm of crisis communications, reputation management and business ethics.

## Methodology

This study will investigate the communication tactics published by the Bikram Corporation during this crisis and assess them against theories and concepts in Public Relations. This study will also evaluate the reaction of the yoga community through a content analysis of 479

comments posted on Yoga Journal's Facebook page on the day an arrest warrant was issued for Choudhury.

Comparing the Bikram Corporation communication tactics against theories and concepts in Public Relations and public reaction is sought to provide additional insight into both Public Relations scholarship and best practices in business.

## Results

Throughout the crisis, the communication tactics employed by Bikram Corporation were to: deny all allegations; advertise and promote Bikram Yoga; and safeguard the Choudhury empire. The goal of crisis communications should be to create trust and credibility, educate your publics, and involve them in the decision-making process (Grimm, 2005).i. Not one of these steps was evident in Bikram Corporation's communications that followed alongside the crisis. The Bikram Corporation was disengaged from the conversations that were taking place in the community, nor did stakeholder concerns appear to be a factor in their communications campaign. The findings emphasize the importance of integrating ethics with a strategic communications function to safeguard publics and hence organizational reputation.

## Implications

Yoga is a way of life; it is a system of awareness that has evolved into a business service that is packaged and sold. Yoga, however noble a practice, is a business that operates in a landscape that is governed by societal norms. As with any business, it must be guided by a holistic strategy that adheres to ethical principles and commits to stakeholder value beyond the services being sold. This study highlights the importance of strategic communications and underscores the need for leadership commitment to creating a culture of respect within organizations. In our current climate of #MeToo, #IdleNoMore and #BlackLivesMatter, more Public Relations research is needed to guide best business practices towards safe, inclusive, and



respectful workplace cultures as well as the need for greater social responsibility.

### Limitations

One of the most significant limitations of this study was the inability to obtain an interview from a representative of the Bikram Corporation. Another limitation was the sample size of just under 480 social media comments.

### Keywords

*Crisis Communications, Reputation, Stakeholder Engagement, and Business Ethics*

# A uses and gratifications exploration of young women's instagram usage

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## Introduction and purpose of the study

The proposed research will apply a modified version of Uses and Gratifications theory to the use of Instagram by young women aged 18-30. Examining this image-led landscape, the research will explore the uses and gratifications the target research group experience from engagement with the platform. Instagram stories, a less image-focused, live feature of Instagram will also be explored. The key aim of the research serves both scholarly and commercial interests. In identifying purposive intent and resulting gratifications in Instagram use, the research will promote better understanding of online behaviour among this user group and also provide data to underpin future research into online marketing practices.

## Literature Review

Unlike previous theories in media and communications research, Uses and Gratifications theory (UGT) outlined by Katz et al. (1973) saw the audience as active consumers of media, viewing them as decision-makers rather than passive consumers. UGT fell out of favour in the late twentieth century, with critics citing its individualistic approach and a lack of attention to social context as problematic. The expansion of the internet, and particularly the rise of social media, has prompted a return to favour, providing fertile ground for analysing user behaviour in response to opportunities it gives to create, share and engage with content online. Ruggiero (2000) argued that 'Contemporary and future models [of UGT] must include concepts such as interactivity, demassification, hypertextuality, and asynchronicity.' This approach has been widely adopted and UGT is frequently applied to underpin research into online behaviour.

The proposed research notes that 'internet users use media for a purposive benefit that involves active behavioural control in which media content is sought because of internal motivations' (Zolkepli et al. 2018). It is these internal motivations, and particularly the concepts of personal, social and tension release highlighted by Zolkepli et al, that this research seeks to uncover.

## Methodology

A deductive stance will be taken, as the research question has been developed based on the literature above, which in turn will drive the process of gathering data (Saunders et al. 2016). As a result of choosing a deductive approach, the post positivistic attitude of critical realism is to be utilised, which will explore the women's uses of Instagram and what gratification they perceive they receive from using Instagram (Easterby-Smith et al. 2015).

The research method chosen is quantitative in the form of an online survey that will be distributed to 500 young women aged 18-30. It will be stressed at the beginning of the survey that all answers are anonymous so very little personal data will be requested. A five-point likert scale will be used so that participants can rate how often they use Instagram, for how long at any one time and what kind of gratification they get from its use. Alpha testing will be conducted prior to distribution of the survey with two of the researchers' colleagues, to improve the validity of the results.

All participants will be chosen via non-probability, convenience sampling. As a result, there will be no control group with which to compare the results of the survey. Descriptive statistics will be used to analyse the data, along with the use of correlation tests.





There is a key limitation to the research especially when asking participants for their own perception, the nature of the questions will rely on the ability of the young women to accurately report their behaviour and usage of Instagram.

### Practical and social implications

It is anticipated that the research will provide insights into why young women use Instagram and what they perceive the benefits of engagement with the platform to be. The research will highlight the personal, social and tension release aspects of Instagram use and it is anticipated that these areas will indicate which, if any, of these dominates use of the platform and should therefore be subject to further scrutiny.

### Keywords

*Uses and Gratifications, Instagram, Women, Social Media*

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# Investigating the visual component of digital reputation

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## Introduction and purpose of the study

Digital reputation management has assumed a crucial role for modern companies, as its effectiveness could contribute to maintain a positive online footprint and to develop effective engaging relationships with online stakeholders. Recent trends in online communication have emphasized the potential positive link between online reputation and visual communication (Tsabar, Coy, 2018). Image can be considered as one of the dimensions of reputation, as it refers to organizational level of organizational likeability, trust and admiration (Carroll, 2009). Hence, there is a general call for a need to manage visual reputation. Against this background, this study intends to investigate the impact of visual communication features of online contents on digital users' perceptions of the following corporate reputation dimensions: products/services quality; citizenship; innovation; leadership; workplace; performance and governance. It intends to explore if online contents with specific visual features can influence the impressions formed by online users.

## Literature review

This study adopts a multidisciplinary approach. The visual grammar of the online visual content will be analyzed by taking into account the perspective of visual social semiotics, according to which the presence of specific design principles can impact image's functions and effects (Harrison, 2003). The analysis of the impact of online visual-based contents on users' impressions of corporate reputation will be supported by exploring the extant studies on impression management, which assume that by the means of impression management

organizations can manage legitimacy threats for improving their corporate reputation (Hooghiemstra, 2000).

## Methodology

An experimental approach will be implemented to analyse users' perceptions towards visual stimuli shared online by the means of Instagram. Participants are exposed to the online visual Instagram stimuli taken from official Instagram account of companies selected from the RepTrak™ Pulse. Then, the participants are asked to rate items about their impressions of reputational dimensions.

## Results and conclusions

Visual features of online contents can affect the development of users' impressions towards specific issues related to the corporate reputation. As a consequence, the online visual communication is becoming a crucial online image and reputation-building strategy.

## Practical and social implications

Results from this study will be useful to communication professionals who deal with visual communication strategies to enhance the consistency of their online visual contents with their corporate reputation. To exploit new opportunities provided by social media for enhancing online trust and effectively managing reputation, organizations need to develop a more accurate understanding of the online visual communication features that could impact digital

users' impression.

### Keywords

Visual Reputation, Digital Reputation, Impression management

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# The Turtle and its Consequences. A case study on trust and reputation in internal change and crisis communication within a German insurance company

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## Introduction

Businesses and organizations need to change through different circumstances and influences. In short, change projects and strategies need to be started. Employees are often affected by the changes. But change can always lead to fears or rejections. Trust and confidence between management and employees are therefore highly needed. Klaus Merten (2014) goes on to say that any change can lead to a crisis. The following research examines this kind of crisis. The aim of this research is therefore to evaluate which kind of communication measures are successful in internal crisis situations and which can quickly destroy nearly all reputation of the leaders within their workforce. This is done based on a content analysis using the example of a large German insurance company.

## Short Literature Review

So far crises mainly have been discussed in context of its effects on external stakeholders (Institute for PR, 2014). It's defined "as significant to operations or reputations that can have negative consequences if not handled properly" (Institute for PR, 2014). Crises can threaten three sectors from the perspective of an organization: public safety, financial loss, and reputation loss based on missing trust and critical reputation. But what if crises occur within an organization? There a great lack of research and evaluation is existing. Therefore a

definition of an internal trust crisis has to be developed which is based various elements and measures of internal communication and crisis communication, which have been first considered. A new own definition on an internal trust crisis could be at the end.

## Methodology

The research proposed here is based on a 2018 case study about a large change strategy project within a German insurance company. For this strategic project, a special, at the end very polarizing campaign with different motifs and stories had been developed and mainly be presented via the social intranet of the company. One motif was showing a turtle and criticizing some departments for not working fast enough from a clients' perspective. The employees had the opportunity to comment below the postings of these publications which they did in a quite critical and direct way. At the end, this led to strong internal crisis where even one subsidiary even threatened to stop all work until the campaign would have been withdrawn.

This paper will focus on a quantitative and qualitative content analysis of these altogether 286 comments. A full survey on this has been conducted: The comments before the crisis (116 comments), in the crisis (63) and after the crisis (107) were taken into account. At each point in time, not only tonality was analyzed from a variety of perspectives, but also e. g. if clients,



management or employees were acting, mentioned or shown, which optical elements or textual strategies were chosen, if they were trust building or more confrontative etc.. In order to identify aspects of internal communications that affect the tonality, all comments were considered in the context of the post under which they were published. As a result conclusions regarding the construction of intranet posts could be drawn.

### Results, conclusions & practical implications

The results of the analysis show that the chosen measures were despite many problems quite successful when the management decided to run a more trust and dialogue oriented approach, but had shown many

reputational problem before. Accordingly, a personal and dialogue-oriented communication for the crisis situation at the large German insurance company can be recommended based on the "Mortification" approach of Coombs (1995).

Furthermore different aspects of constructing an intranet post could be identified that affect the tonality on different levels. Many general conclusion concerning trust and reputation especially in internal crisis situation will be drawn from this in the last phase of the project until the Bledcom conference.

### Keywords

*crisis communications, change processes, internal communications, internal crises, trust crisis*

# Dimensionality of Academic Reputation

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## Introduction and purpose of the study

Reputation is an important concept of corporate communication and strategic management. Academic environments are similarly full of challenges (such as attracting students, professors and funds) that raise the importance of developing and maintaining strong reputations. In spite of a clear need, managing reputations in an academic setting is still rather unexplored. Partially, the problem is that there is no generally accepted definition, specifically in the area of academic reputation. The dominant paradigm proposes that reputation is a multidimensional concept. The main purpose of our study was to explore potential multidimensionality of academic reputation and develop and test an instrument for its measurement.

## Literature review

Globalization is affecting the status that academic institutions have among their key stakeholders. The growing mobility of students is adding pressure to increase the quality of education, research and social engagement (Steiner, Sundstrom & Sammalisto, 2012). Modern universities have to fight for their students, professors and ranks as well as projects and numerous other goals in a competitive environment. In spite of a clear need for developing and maintaining strong academic reputations with major stakeholder groups, managing reputations in an academic setting is still rather unexplored. For universities in smaller countries (such as Croatia or Slovenia) it is becoming increasingly important to build distinct identity profiles that both attract students and faculty and through that employ top competence. In this study we started from the approach that defines reputation as a construct representing aggregated perceptions of people in and around organizations (Fombrun, 1996).

Fombrun used this approach as the base of one of the most popular measures of corporate reputation, the Reputation Quotient (Kanto et al., 2013). Reputation quotient is a multidimensional construct comprised of six dimensions that identify stakeholders' perceptions of an organization's reputation. Vidaver-Cohen (2007) expanded this framework originally developed for measurement of reputation of private sector firms to business schools and speculated that many attributes shown to be valid predictors of corporate reputation seem appropriate for business school context. We took Vivader-Cohen's conceptualization of business school reputation and constructed a questionnaire for measurement of academic reputation through the eight dimensions she proposed.

## Methodology

In order to answer our main research question, we combined qualitative and quantitative measurement. The qualitative stage consisted of 25 in-depth interviews with members of key stakeholder groups. The quantitative stage included the application of the questionnaire (26 items representing 8 dimensions of reputation), administered among three key stakeholder groups of a big university.

## Results and conclusion

The results did not support the theoretical assumption of an 8 factor solution (only one main dimension emerged). Theoretically, that implies a general factor determining overall academic reputations across stakeholders. Practically, that means that a robust and general questionnaire could be developed to be used across academic institutions and their stakeholders. The final result of the study is a proposed unidimensional, six item measure of reputation.

### Practical and social implications

The main practical implication of the study is to help academic institutions measure, manage and enhance their reputation. In a world where so much depends on it, it is crucial to find better ways of improving reputation.

### Keywords

*Reputation, academic reputation, dimensions of reputation, reputation measurement*

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# Crisis communication as a strategy to protect reputation: Mirinda brand as a case

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## Introduction and Purpose

Crisis events are appearing to be a recurring scenario on daily lives of companies generating negative outcome on their performance. In recent times, Ethiopian companies are also increasingly experiencing the hardship of crisis. Nonetheless, local companies seem not to endeavour scientific and strategic crisis communication efforts to protect their reputation and maintain smooth relationship with their stakeholders. This research explores a crisis scenario occurred at MOHA Soft Drinks Share Company, particularly to its well-known brand named Mirinda as a case study. The study therefore examined the role of strategic crisis communication at all phases of the crisis to protect the reputational assets.

Two research questions were therefore developed emphasising the Mirinda crisis.

(RQ1) were crisis prevention and preparation efforts available at the company that enables to protect the reputational asset? (RQ2) What crisis response strategies were employed to maintain the reputation of the company as well as its brands?

## Literature review

Van Riel define corporate reputation as “ a collective representation of a firm's past actions and results that describes the firm's ability to deliver valued outcomes to multiple stakeholders (Van Riel & Fombrun, 1997, pp. 5-13)”. From this definition, it is possible to understand that reputation is the foundation asset for the sustainability of corporate companies. However, scholars agree that reputation is not a fixed or consistent asset to sustain forever, rather it tends to be unstable depending on the organization act. Particularly, during crisis time companies' commitment towards adjusting the perception of their stakeholders

is critically important. Because, during crisis time if stakeholders attribute the company as responsible for the crisis events, the reputation would negatively be impacted (Coombs, 2007).

## Methodology

The research approach taken in this case study employed qualitative method. In order to gather primary data, in-depth interview with key informants was conducted with selected top-level management officials. Key stakeholders were also interviewed to have an insight on their perception towards the crisis. In addition, the research also extracted relevant data from secondary sources such as letters and radio interviews, reports and other documents.

For data analysis, Situational Crisis Communication Theory was employed as a model to assess the stakeholders' perception about the crisis and to assess the effectiveness of the crisis response strategies to minimize the responsibility for a crisis.

## Summary and Findings

To address the pre-crisis phase, the study attempted to assess the presence of major crisis prevention and preparation endeavours at the company. Hence, the availability of crisis communication plan, the effort of detecting signals and views on the crisis time spokesperson, and the recalling capacity of the company were assessed and analysed in detail. The overall findings therefore uncovered that the crisis prevention and the preparation of the company needs further works.

According to SCCT, to assess the perceived organizational responsibility for the crisis, the procedure should begin with identifying the type of the crisis. In this regard the



study identified the crisis type as a “rumour” type of crisis that triggers a mild reputational risk.

In an effort to assess whether there were intensifying factors for the crisis, the study also explored existence of similar crisis history and unfavourable prior relational reputation with stakeholders. In this regard, findings revealed that the company did not experience a similar type of crisis. In addition, results of the study indicated that the company has a favourable prior relational reputation with its stakeholders. Therefore, these findings indicated that the crisis did not seem to have intensifying factors.

### **Keywords**

*Crisis, Crisis Communication, Reputation, Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT)*

# Exploring a space for distrust in public relations

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## Introduction

In public relations, trust has been viewed as the ultimate marker of excellent relationship quality (Hon & Grunig, 1999). In fact trust is frequently cited throughout the public relations literature as one of the key ways to measure the outcome and purpose of any public relations effort. Recent global events however have undermined trust in many of society's major institutions and organisations. Following on from the global financial crisis, we have seen political parties, businesses, media publications and social media networks being exposed for significant breaches of public trust. As a result industry professionals and reports have been professing that the world is experiencing a crisis in trust contributing to a prominent rise in the discussion of public distrust (Edelman, 2018). Academically however distrust as a concept has remained underdeveloped (Kang & Park, 2017). This study seeks to explore the space for distrust in public relations by answering the research question: how do stakeholders define trust and distrust and are they distinct from one another?

## Literature Review

Inextricably connected with the concept of trust, distrust has often been viewed as the opposite end of the same conceptual continuum and, therefore, has been treated as the absence of trust (Kang & Park, 2017). Earlier, management scholars Lewicki, McAllister and Bies' (1998) however argued that "low distrust is not the same thing as high trust, and high distrust is not the same thing as low trust" (Lewicki et al, 1998, p 444). Through their proposed model the authors illustrated that there are "elements that contribute to

the growth and decline of trust, and there are elements that contribute to the growth and decline of distrust" (Lewicki et al, 1998, p. 440) which makes the two constructs theoretically and conceptually separate.

Despite being widely cited, scholars have been slow to empirically demonstrate the operationalisation of distrust as a distinct construct as proposed by Lewicki et al (1998). In part, this is due to the ongoing debate particularly within the management literature on whether or not trust and distrust should in fact be considered separate and distinct. Defending their model of trust put forward in 1995, Schoorman, Davis and Mayer (2007) argue that as a lack of trust and the existence of distrust would result in the same outcome, there is "little added value to treating them as separate constructs" (p. 350). While this argument may suit the needs of management scholarship, acknowledging that trust and distrust are two separate constructs has implications for public relations scholars and practitioners. While public relations research has traditionally focussed on building and repairing trust, different communication strategies may be needed if organisations are actually experiencing levels of distrust. Accordingly, this paper examines whether distrust should be treated as a separate and distinct construct to trust in public relations scholarship.

## Methodology

Using a repeated single-criterion card sort method followed by semi-structured interviews in an initial sample of 40 respondents, this research seeks to ascertain how stakeholders define trust and distrust



and whether these concepts are considered distinct from one another. The use of card-sorting techniques has been applied in trust research previously to establish the different emotions respondents associate with trust in organisations. Building off these studies, this research has conducted a systematic literature review of the existing multi-disciplinary definitions of both trust and distrust to create a list of terms and phrases to be utilised in the card-sort activity.

Respondents will be asked to review the full list of cards and sort out which terms they associate with trust and then distrust separately. To avoid any ordering bias, the activity will alternate from starting with trust to distrust equally. It is expected that the data collected from the card-sort and follow-up interviews will illustrate common themes from respondents of their conceptualisations of the two concepts, as well as whether respondents view trust and distrust as simply the opposite of each other or separate and distinct concepts with different antecedents.

### Practical & Social Implications

We believe that by furthering our understanding of the definitional and conceptual notions of distrust, public relations scholars and professionals will be able to better address the growing levels of distrust in today's society through effective communication strategies. Contributing to the wider body of trust literature, this paper will conclude with suggestions to improve

the conceptualisation and measurement of trust and distrust in public relations.

### Keywords

*Distrust, Trust, Organisational-Public Relationships, Institutional Distrust*

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# How Individuals Ascribe Meaning to NPO Reputation and Trust: An Anthropomorphist Perspective

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## Introduction and purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to grasp the shared understandings that exist in society regarding individuals' perceptions on NPO reputation and trust, through free-elicitation interviews. The current research investigates how people portray characteristics of (dis)reputable and (un)trustworthy NPOs as human entities.

## Literature review

It is increasingly argued that there are lower levels of awareness about NPOs compared to corporate bodies (Chew, 2009, p. 5), that NPOs form weaker social bonds (Voeth and Herbst, 2008, p. 74) and face growing competition (Wang, Duan, Yu, 2016). This makes reputation and trust more important than ever for NPOs, which, with limited resources, need to attract donors, volunteers, funding, and media attention. Therefore, it is crucial for NPOs to capture individuals' perceptions with regard to their organizational reputation and trust. Anthropomorphism, i.e., assigning human qualities to non-human entities, can be utilized to measure the aforementioned perceptions. The use of anthropomorphism in the corporate world creates awareness of the existence of organizations, helps to build bonds with the public? and distinguishes the organization from others (Davies, Chun, da Silva and Roper, 2004). Accordingly, individuals feel less threatened in their relationship with the organization (Tong and Su, 2014). Thus, this study employs anthropomorphist approach to uncover common

meanings of NPO reputation and trust. In addition to the separate examination of the two constructs, conducting an intersectional examination would allow a better understanding of the links between constructs in the minds of individuals. The relationship between reputation and trust has attracted considerable attention by scholars. Of particular interest are studies that confirm reputation as the antecedent of trust (Van Der Merwe & Puth, 2014; Wang et al., 2014), and those that find it to be an outcome (Gardberg & Fombrun, 2002). Stemming from the interdependency of these two constructs, this study assumes that individuals attribute common characteristics to reputation and trust.

## Methodology

Semantic network analysis is employed to capture shared meaning of NPO reputation and trust, utilizing an anthropomorphist approach. This approach originates from the idea that people tend to assign human traits to non-human entities, as if considering them to possess intellects, emotions, attitudes, aspirations, and characters. Thus, a total of 482 semi-structured interviews were conducted; 212 for NPO reputation and 270 for trust. Respondents were asked to provide three adjectives used to describe people that they would apply to each 'reputable, disreputable, trustworthy and untrustworthy organization'. The collected data were analyzed using Pajek, a software package for Windows designed for the analysis and visualization of large networks. To the best knowledge of the authors,

there has so far been no empirical research on NPO reputation and trust utilizing anthropomorphist approach via network analysis. Thus, this study will make a methodological contribution to the literature, leading to an elaborated understanding of the issues.

## Findings

The analysis is still ongoing and thus the results will be not be available until it is completed. . In the first step, the result of the analysis will be in the form of four semantic networks – a ‘reputable/ disreputable’ and a ‘trustworthy/untrustworthy’ network from dataset. Additionally, common associations of reputation and trust will be ranked according to weights, on vertices and arcs.

## Practical and Social implications

Researching social meanings of NPOs based on their corporate character can have important consequences for measuring public perceptions of NPOs. Moreover, through the obtained associations, the study will contribute to relevant literature by providing a range/ list/taxonomy of reputation and trust-based corporate personality characteristics. From a practical point of view, the results will potentially benefit NPOs, by shedding light on the processes involved in the management of social perception and judgments..

## Keywords

NPO reputation, NPO trust, Anthropomorphism, Social meaning, Semantic Network

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# Trust Research in Public Relations: An Assessment of Its Conceptual, Theoretical and Methodological Foundations

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## Introduction and purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to offer a comprehensive, up-to-date review of scientific publications dealing with public relations and trust to explore the current status of public relations' conceptual definitions, measurements, and theorising of trust.

## Literature review

During the past years, distrust among publics towards core institutions in society has increased (Edelman Trust Barometer, 2018). It has been argued that the erosion of trust is, among others, imputable to an increasing evolution to a post truth era, that is a time in which "objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief" (Oxford Dictionary, 2016). For some, public relations has played a key role in fostering a post truth era. On the other hand, it has been argued that public relations role should be fundamentally that of building, enhancing, and maintaining trust among social systems, that is publics, institutions and organizations (Valentini & Kruckeberg, 2011). So, what role does trust play in public relations scholarship? How has it been conceptualized, measured and discussed in relation to key professional problems? And to which extent the current trust research in public relations and related disciplines address today's post truth era problems?

## Methodology

Only English language scientific papers published in *Asia Pacific Public Relations Journal*, *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*, *Corporate Reputation Review*, *International Journal of Strategic Communication*, *Journal of Communication Management*,

*Journal of Public Relations Research*, *Public Relations Inquiry*, *PRISM* and *Public Relations Review* will be analyzed (cf. Duhé, 2015; Volk, 2016). These journals were selected because of their capacity to represent different scholarly perspectives and at the same time because of their focus on public relations, communication management and strategic communication, the latter two are considered disciplines highly related to public relations. A search with the following keywords "public relations" and/ or "strategic communication" and/ or "communication management" and "trust" in the title, abstract and keywords will be conducted. Only academic papers having as a central topic trust will be carefully reviewed and subjected to a thematic analysis.

## Results and conclusions

The results will shed lights on the current status of the development of trust research in public relations. Specifically, it will offer a review and discussion of the current status of a) the definitions and conceptual foundations of trust, b) the salient and underrated topics related to trust presented in public relations and journals, and d) the theoretical and methodological approaches applied to trust.

## Practical and social implications

This study will offer important information about the development of trust research in public relations and potential knowledge gaps that can inform future research in the field.

## Keywords

*trust, public relations, thematic analysis, literature review*



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# Active trust in organizations and the role of public relations

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## Introduction and purpose

There is a general assumption that levels of organizational and social performance are positively correlated to levels of trust among key stakeholders. Both academics and practitioners postulate that gaining trust is a key purpose of public relations and corporate communications. This requires knowledgeable, ethical and transparent practices, which are not always easy to obtain. This study focusses on the ways in which communication professionals deal with the active production of trust, and investigates the objectives, challenges and difficulties of communicating transparently about organizations and their activities.

## Literature review

Trust is central to organizational behavior. People employ trust in conditions of risk to increase the tolerance for uncertainty and to reduce complexity of the decision-making situation (Luhmann, 1979). Trust is therefore essential for operation in a VUCA (volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous) world. Giddens (1994) developed a typology of trust: basic trust (children develop at the age of around one or two a basic sense of trust or mistrust toward the world around them and toward themselves), elementary or interpersonal trust (develops through kinship – the in-group is good), abstract or impersonal trust (in expert systems), and active trust (which develops through “a process of mutual narrative and emotional disclosure” – “opening out” is good). Public relations and corporate communications should be focused on the cultivation of active trust. But building trust through communication can be difficult. Previous research shows that

communication needs to be knowledgeable, ethical and transparent at the same time (Bentele & Seiffert, 2009). This is not easy to achieve. While information facilitates trust, managed transparency is a form of “strategic information disclosure” (Albu & Flyverbom, 2016, p. 9). Moreover, some information might not be accessible to communication professionals, and some facts may not be suitable for sharing publicly. This means that transparency is both a key driver but at the same time a crucial challenge of building active trust in organizations (Schnackenberg & Tonlinson, 2016).

## Purpose of the study

This study investigates practitioners’ perceptions about what are the goals of building and maintaining trust in contemporary organizations (RQ1), what are the biggest hurdles in building trust (RQ2), and which are the critical fields and topics that are difficult to be transparent about (RQ3).

## Methodology

An empirical survey of public relations and corporate communications practitioners in over 40 countries in Europe will be conducted. It will be administered online and the sample is purposive – over 40,000 communication professionals are invited to participate. The questionnaire is based on a literature review and previous research, and it has been pre-tested. Instruments use dichotomous, nominal and ordinal response scales. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) is used for data analysis.

### Results and conclusions

The survey will be completed by early March 2019. Analysis and interpretation will be prepared and originally presented in July 2019 at the symposium.

### Practical and social implications

Public relations and corporate communications are supposed to be engaged in the cultivation of trust among stakeholders, and to be transparent when doing so. The success or failure of the activities has important organizational and social consequences.

### Keywords

trust, transparency, public relations, corporate communications

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# Active employee communication roles in the future: Voluntary no more?

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## Introduction & Purpose

In order to be successful in contemporary organizations, it is not enough for employees to engage in task-supporting communication. Increasingly, employees are also expected to contribute to the functioning of the organization as a whole: for example, by representing the organization in societal discourses, by scanning for environmental changes in norms or technology (Kim and Rhee, 2011), and by defending the organization when faced with criticism (Luoma-aho, 2015). This extended role definition challenges and complicates organizational communication for employees, and increases job demands considerably. While several active employee behaviors have received quite some attention, no typology for employee communication roles exists that is firmly grounded in organizational, corporate, and strategic communication literature. This is unfortunate because many communication tasks are now shifting from the communication professionals to employees. This paper aims to improve our understanding of communication role expectations and role enactment in the future workspace.

## Literature Review

Successful employees increasingly play numerous communication roles simultaneously, but role expectations are usually ambiguous, and extended communication roles can lead to role overload and role conflict. Communication roles for communication professionals have been conceptualized reasonably well. For example, Broom and Smith (1979) distinguished the roles of expert prescriber, communication facilitator, problem-solver, and communication technician.

## Methodology

We have reviewed organizational, corporate, and strategic communication literature for active communication behaviors. On the basis of these behaviors, we introduce a typology of eight employee communication roles.

## Results and Conclusions

Eight communication roles are proposed: The embodier, the promotor, the defender, the scout, the relationship builder, the sensemaker, the innovator, and the critic.

Externally, employee communication (1) embodies, (2) promotes, and (3) defends the organization. These three roles are predominantly described in literature on branding (e.g., literature on brand ambassadorship) and in crisis communication literature (Frandsen & Johansen, 2011).

In addition, employees use communication to (4) scout for information and insights about environmental changes, and (5) build and maintain relationships with stakeholders. These roles are predominantly based on public relations literature on environmental scanning (e.g., Dozier, 1986; Kim and Rhee, 2011), the excellence theory (Grunig & Dozier, 2003), and the relationship management approach (Ledingham, 2003).

Internally (as well as externally), employees use communication to (6) make sense of information, (7) initiate and stimulate innovation, and (8) criticize organizational behavior and decisions. These roles are based on organizational theory (Weick, Sutcliffe,

& Obstfeld, 2005), organizational psychology (i.e., creativity and innovativeness), and management and business ethics literature (e.g., employee voice literature; Detert & Burris, 2007).

### Practical and Social Implications

Combined, these eight roles improve our understanding of the roles employees may be expected to play at work. This typology may help scholars, employees, and managers to understand, analyze, and discuss communication problems that arise from role ambiguity, role overload and role conflict.

Organizational citizenship (which involves the enactment of active communication roles) is often motivated by a sense of organizational identification and commitment and has often been characterized as voluntary extra-role behavior (Donovan, Brown, & Mowen, 2004) or organizational citizenship behavior. This type of behavior has been defined as “discretionary”, meaning that it is not an “enforceable requirement of the role or the job description”, but rather “a matter of personal choice, such that its omission is not generally understood as punishable” (Organ, 1988, p. 4). However, these behaviors are often not completely discretionary, but rather, employees may feel like the social environment (leaders, colleagues,

significant others, professional contacts) puts more-or-less implicit expectations and requirements on them. In that sense, active communication is becoming a requirement for job advancement, rather than a voluntary effort. As such, particularly for employees in senior and managerial roles, active communication roles are becoming more or less mandatory. This puts a lot of pressure on employees because they have to allocate their scarce resources to the execution of many different roles. By introducing our eight-role typology, we hope to provide a framework that helps employees to understand their enactment of active communication roles and to strategically allocate resources to the enactment of those communicative roles. It may help managers to explicate and reconsider their expectations of employees, in order to strategically use employee talents in a more effective way. Finally, it may help scholars to better analyze the workplace in terms of communication role enactment. As yet, empirical studies have yet to explore the validity of our framework in describing role expectations and role enactment in different settings, for different employees (e.g., knowledge workers) and on different media (e.g., internal and external social media).

### Keywords

*Communication management, Communication roles, Employee Advocacy*

# From Licence to Operate to Licence to Lead: A Case Study of 7-Eleven Canada's Corporate Legitimacy and Reputation

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## Introduction

This case study puts to the test the theoretical concepts of corporate legitimacy and reputation in practice with a national and global retail leader. Under investigation is 7-Eleven Canada's corporate legitimacy and reputation as perceived by provincial government regulators.

Exploratory research gave rise to three research questions: What is 7-Eleven Canada's reputation or image among provincial regulators? RQ2 tests how the attributes of the governance dimension contribute to 7-Eleven's reputation. RQ3 explores how 7-Eleven and its compliance programs influence regulator evaluations of the brand.

Until now, no formal research has measured regulators' perceptions of 7-Eleven Canada. Surveying regulators who can influence the retailer's business and social licence would help illuminate enterprise risks and opportunities.

## Literature Review

The literature review explores the evolution of scholarly definitions of corporate legitimacy and reputation, in relation to the theoretical concepts of image and identity. It examines the formation of corporate legitimacy and reputation through the lens of institutional theory and resource-based theory.

Corporate legitimacy is understood as stakeholder perceptions of a firm's conformity to the accountability standards of legal, regulatory and social-political norms. Firms that differentiate among competitors and elevate their actions above the minimum accountability standards in pursuit of ideal or normative standards

build corporate reputation. Scholars are recognizing the limits of legitimacy's primary benefit of securing licence to operate, and emphasizing reputation's higher accountability standard of licence to lead.

This case study examines the relationship between corporate legitimacy and reputation by analyzing the perceptions of regulators from three separate institutionalized contexts. Assuming reputation is formed by deviation from the average, is the runway of corporate legitimacy required for reputation to take flight? Can reputation develop in an organization afflicted by substandard legitimacy?

## Methodology

Primary data for the case study research method was mined from online surveys that analyzed firm legitimacy and reputation as perceived by provincial regulators. Secondary sources included a literature review, documentation and archival evidence. For the online surveys, a nonprobability convenience sample was selected based on the challenges of participant recruitment. The sample was 46 provincial regulators. The completed sample was the 16 regulators in gaming control, tobacco control, and healthy food promotion who completed the online survey, for a 34% response rate.

## Results and Conclusions

The research finds that success on regulatory compliance and social responsibility were the main drivers of 7-Eleven Canada's reputation. When measured against governance dimension attributes, 57% of regulators awarded 7-Eleven a favourable

reputation compared to its reference group.

7-Eleven Canada's reputation appears to mirror that of its convenience industry group. High marks for regulatory compliance failed to attain high reputation scores and rankings.

Perceptions aside, 7-Eleven Canada's actual regulatory compliance record was high, as verified by case law and government data. However, only 69% of regulators perceived 7-Eleven to be compliant with regulation, suggesting corporate legitimacy was not fully baked. The findings also suggest stellar regulatory compliance outcomes do not always equate to perceptions of compliance.

Nevertheless, in a follow-up question, over half of the respondents (57%) agreed that 7-Eleven's compliance program exceeded the industry average. Substandard legitimacy on compliance did not prevent 7-Eleven from building reputation on elevated compliance measures, suggesting that legitimacy and reputation can function independently.

With agreement from 94% of regulators, the survey verified that a firm's efforts to elevate its regulatory compliance programs over the industry average tip the scales and build reputational capital.

The internal validity of the research is limited by a relatively small sample of regulators. Based on a nonprobability sample, the research findings cannot be generalized to another population of regulators.

An untested model in the case study seeks to understand the relationship between the variables of stakeholder expectation, stakeholder perception, and corporate reputation. The idiosyncrasies of some industries may condition different levels of stakeholder expectations that influence regulator perceptions. The model could be used as a tool to guide resource allocation for corporate reputation management.

Future research could investigate how regulatory accountability standards are formed. To what extent are they based on actual regulatory compliance or on the compliance program itself?

## Practical and Social Implications

By benchmarking performance, the research findings set the stage for the development of a corporate reputation management program for 7-Eleven Canada to improve its reputation ranking. The communities served by 7-Eleven would stand to benefit from a reputation management program that conforms to and exceeds publics' expectations.

The case study findings have wider implications for strategic planning. As a resource attraction strategy, corporate reputation management may merit consideration for greater resource investment despite any deficiencies in a firm's corporate legitimacy.

## Keywords

*Corporate reputation, corporate legitimacy, 7-Eleven Canada*



# Evolving CSR in the arts and culture sector: A comparison of corporate partnership and corporate sponsorship

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## Introduction

Due to the continuously increasing flow of information facilitated through the innovations of new media technologies, consumers are more aware than ever of the operations of companies in the global market. In particular, they become more sensitive about a company's action contributing to social and environmental benefits and progressively engage in critical discussions online about such issues. Thus, the importance to engage in profound corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives is rising, as consumers' behaviour and attitudes towards a company's reputation are influenced by its moral and ethical operations within a community (Lii & Lee, 2011). Following this notion, businesses intensify the integration of CSR communication as part of their reputation management to foster a positive brand association amongst target audiences (Hur, Kim, & Woo, 2013).

## Literature review

The arts and cultural sector offers a beneficial field of CSR collaborations for businesses as it is closely related to consumers' lifestyle and modern consumption habits. In previous studies regarding CSR initiatives in the field of arts and culture, a strong focus on the importance of corporate contributions to this field and the benefits of CSR initiatives for business was taken. Notably, specific impacts of CSR initiatives such as sponsorship and partnership on consumers were broadly researched while underlining an academic

controversy about the appropriateness and benefits of each action (Egels-Zandén & Wahlqvist, 2006). In particular, main contributions to the academic field included studies underlining the conceptualisation of characteristics of both initiatives and empirical research on the application of these dimensions of CSR in corporate communications (Iyer, 2003; Pappu & Cornwell, 2014).

## Purpose of the study

This study investigated the relationship of two prominent CSR dimensions (i.e. partnership and sponsorship) in the field of arts and culture and corporate reputation, with the focus on a specific stakeholder group – the millennials. The fact that both CSR dimensions are experience-based enables corporates to create emotional ties with target audiences while connecting to an image of a greater social good. In particular, the unique position of both CSR practices and their similarity in the relationship to reputation building underlines the relevance of analysing and comparing the initiatives.

## Methodology

154 millennials were recruited for an online experiment, using a convenience sampling through posting an open-call on the Facebook pages of the 100 most visited art museums in the world.

### Results and conclusions

The results suggest that sponsorship and partnership both indicate a positive effect on corporate reputation, whereas partnership is more appealing to the millennials than sponsorship. We also examined the moderation effects of sincerity, value alignment and CSR reputation on the relationship between CSR and corporate reputation. All three moderators are found to strengthen the relationship, while the impact of CSR reputation is the strongest among them.

### Practical and social implications

Within the field of arts and cultural, the engagement in sponsorships and partnerships of companies are evaluated by consumers to be mutually beneficial practices, which foster a level of sustainability and advancement of arts and cultural activities due to corporate support. Our findings imply that companies should be aware of the need to present themselves as a trustworthy collaborator and the necessity to fulfil their duties deriving from the engagement in a particular CSR dimension.

### Keywords

Corporate social responsibility, partnership, sponsorship, arts, culture, corporate reputation

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# Celebrity's Social Responsibility and moral agency. Aspirational talk, philanthropy or reputation jeopardy

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## Introduction & purpose of the study

Globally, half the CO2 emissions associated with individual lifestyles are due to the actions of the richest tenth of humanity<sup>1</sup>. By the same time, there is an increasing number of rich and famous people, who take responsibility and are engaged in either social or environmental sustainability issues. Examples are US music performer and producer Pharrell Williams (sustainable fashion), Australian actor Hugh Jackman (sustainable food/coffee), actors Matt Damon (safe water and sanitation for communities) or Leonardo DiCaprio (eco-tourism) and model Amber Valetta (ethical fashion brand)<sup>2</sup>. In our paper, we ask the question if there is something that can be called "Celebrity's Social Responsibility" and, related to this, what is the potential and what are the barriers of celebrities communicating about their responsibility in terms of perceived credibility, proximity and engagement?

## Literature Review

The communication of sustainability issues and related activities has never been more important than today, in an age of mediatization (Krotz, 2007) and, more precisely, digitalization, leading to an increased complexity of CSR (Rasche et al., 2017, p. 279). However, not only organizations and corporations communicate about their social responsibility and related activities (Rasche et al., 2017, p. 297). Besides, celebrities as highly mediatized individuals take responsibility or are increasingly engaged in environmental or

social sustainability issues. Thus, we discuss various critical perspectives on celebrity's responsibility, from aspirational talk (Christensen et al., 2013) to greenwashing (Delmas & Burbano, 2011; Kotchen & Moon, 2012) and the 'ugly' side (Banerjee, 2003; Elving et al., 2015) of intransparent communication (Hansen et al., 2015) with a lack of authenticity and high reputational risk.

With this, we fill a research gap, because so far individual responsibility is rarely inquired or even asked for in the CSR literature. Here, we developed a three-dimensional framework to grasp celebrities and their "social responsibility". With individual responsibility on the one end, and institutionalized forms of social responsibility (NPO, foundations and other forms of "business of fame") at the other end, we focus on the third "type" of role-related responsibility that we conceptualize as moral agency. We assume that only if moral agency is institutionalized meaning embedded in an organizational framework it protects the celebrity's against reputational risks.

## Methodology

Supported by 12 narrative interviews with journalists, PR people, consultants and political communicators in Austria (2018), we discuss the following question: what is the potential and what are the barriers of celebrities communicating responsibility in terms of perceived credibility, proximity and engagement? We chose a snowball-system in finding partners for narrative

interviews (Brodshöll, 2003; Weder, 2017). Generally, interviewing is one of the most intimate and rewarding communication research methodologies (McCracken, 1988). The text corpus of the interviews was analyzed with a qualitative text analysis developed by Philipp Mayring (Franzosi, 2007; Mayring, 2002, 2000). This type of summarizing content analysis enables the researcher to generalize the material, which means it can be analyzed on a higher level of abstraction.

### Results, Conclusion, and Limitations

Based on our example and the related interviews, we support the assumption that there is something that can be called celebrity's social responsibility, mainly a form of responsibility as philanthropic "giving back" to the society and not connected to their own "sustainable lifestyle" and footprints there off. However, there is an international trend that celebrities are no longer simply lending their names to causes, ad campaigns or charities. Instead, they are starting their own positive-impact business to help tackle some of today's biggest social and/or environmental problems. Rather than focusing on the business of fame, we conceptualized

this engagement as role-related responsibility or moral agency. The CSR paradox of who says more can be easier criticized seems to be even more applicable for celebrities; the personal reputational risk is much higher compared to institutionalized forms of CSR communication. Therefore, we can support our assumption that the more responsibility-relationships are stable, meaning the more moral agency is taken within a structural, meaning organizational framework and not only as individual, the smaller is the reputational risk.

### Practical and Social Implications

In conclusion, it can be said that the debate on celebrity's social responsibility needs to be extended to and complemented with an individual-ethical perspective and corresponding concepts of moral agency respectively. Moral agency and the conceptual link to moral agents and the role of communication in realizing and organizing this agency will challenge business ethics, CSR communication, PR and organizational communication research in the future.

# Trust and Gen Z in Marketing Communications

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## Introduction and purpose of the study

Gen Z, or iGen, is described by Twenge et al. (2018), as being anyone born after 1995. This generation can spend up to six hours every day engaged on some form of digital media platform, yet they reject more traditional forms of media consumption (ibid). This study examines the extent to which Generation Z trust marketing communications messages and explores the sources and channels which are most influential to this generation.

## Literature review

While the impact of Gen Z on advertising has been explored (Southgate, D, 2017), and the issue of trust in social networks has been examined by a number of authors (Sherchan et al., 2013; Munar & Jacobsen, 2013; Nusair et al., 2013), the extent to which Gen Z trust marketing communications messages has not been investigated. In their study on Gen Y and brand trust and loyalty, Gözüokara & Çolakoglu (2016: 603) assert that, "Trends of the market change with each generation and it is important to understand the consumer behaviours of the respective generational cohort." This study aims to fill this gap in understanding by investigating the motivations and influences of Gen Z.

The literature of internet use and social trust is polarised, there are those such as Nie (2001) and Kraut et al. (1998) who argue that internet users tend to be more individualised and have fewer face-to-face interactions, suggesting a position isolated from and mistrustful of, society, while others argue that online communications can actually have a positive impact on individuals' social trust and lead to more active community engagement (Kavanaugh et al., 2005; Kobayashi et al., 2006; Räsänen

& Kouvo, 2007; Resnick, 2002). More recently studies suggest that young people are now engaging in multi-screening (Dias, 2016) or using digital media while engaging in face-to-face interactions (Belo Angeluci & Huang, 2015) implying the latest generational cohorts are evolving their use of online platforms and digital media.

## Methodology

The data collection method for this qualitative study comprised a focus group formed of ten participants chosen at random and born between 1995 and 2000. Focus groups are a form of group interview in which participants are asked to explore a particular topic in some depth. One of the characteristics of a group interview is the ability to interview a number of people at one time making it an efficient interview method. However, as Bryman (2004: 346) asserts, it is also concerned with the ways in which people discuss an issue as a group and not merely as individuals.

The group was asked to discuss the amount of time they spend on digital media and share their preferred sources of information. They were also asked to explain what influenced them to trust online communications.

## Results and conclusions

The results suggest that Gen Z are less likely to be receptive to traditional forms of marketing communication, and look to their peers for sources of information and influence. The issue of trust is important to them, and authenticity is a key attribute for successful communications. The findings imply that source characteristics and credibility are key drivers of trust for this generational cohort, and that choosing the correct platform is vital.

**Practical and social implications**

The results have implications for communicators looking to develop consumer relationships with Gen Z, and the study offers insights into how to best design effective communications aimed towards this emerging consumer group.

**Keywords**

*Gen Z, Trust, Marketing Communications, Digital Media*

# Teaching trust and reputation: A collaborative autoethnography comparing how crisis communication was taught at an Australian and an Indonesian university

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## Introduction

For Australian and Indonesian public relations practitioners and students, understanding the cultures of each other is important due to their geographic proximity, as well as the business and trade links between both countries. However, as Sriramesh (2003, p. 54) argues, "the complexities of societal factors such as culture, political systems and media systems make Asia a challenging place to conduct strategic PR". Similarly, this complexity makes teaching students about PR in Asia equally challenging.

With a view to contributing to bridging this gap, this paper reports on a teaching exchange that took place in late 2018. One of the academics was born in, and works in, Indonesia while the other was born in New Zealand but works in Australia. Using a collaborative auto-ethnographic methodology, the paper draws on vignettes of their personal experiences teaching into the other's public relations courses. In particular, the study sought to compare how culture may affect how crisis management was taught at both universities, and how cultural notions of trust and reputation may have played into the pedagogy of both authors.

## Literature review

If public relations students are to become proficient globalised professionals it is vital they are exposed to experiences and perspectives from other cultures (Sriramesh, 2003). Nonetheless, most public relations textbooks (and arguably PR curricula) continues to be US-centric, and subsequently many students lack understanding about the globalised nature of the profession and remain "limited in their ability to understand complex cultural connectivity" (Bardham and Weaver, 2011, p. 6). Correspondingly, there have been numerous calls for the internationalization of the PR curriculum, with Fitch (2013) arguing that such an approach "offers scholars an opportunity to address the ethnocentric values and narratives of their discipline and improve learning outcomes for students" (p. 143). This paper aims to contribute to this scholarly endeavor.

## Methodology

The study uses a collaborative autoethnography (CAE) methodology. CAE comprises a research team of two or more researchers, who "pool their lived experiences on selected socio-cultural phenomena and collaboratively analyse and interpret them for commonalities and differences" (Hernandez, Chang,



Ngunjiri, 2017, p. 251). In keeping with this approach, the researchers applied critical reflexivity to report and reflect on their experiences teaching public relations courses in Australia and Indonesia. CAE has not been used previously in public relations research and, by providing a space for multiple participants to engage in knowledge production processes, it potentially offers a more 'authentic' understanding of how student learning might be enhanced. This was considered important in the context of the study.

### Results and conclusions

The research found that trust and reputation were core concepts that underpinned crisis management subjects taught at both universities. Where differences arose was the focus on examples of best/ethical practices of institutions (Indonesia) and, opposingly, a focus on poor or unethical practices by institutions (Australia). This suggests that cultural worldviews informed teaching in these contexts, and that teaching exchanges provided both authors with added insights into their own ideologies. As this is an initial pilot study, the findings will be used to inform a larger joint Australia-Indonesia education research project, involving both of the authors.

### Practical and social implications

The findings of the study also echo some of the findings of the 2018 Edelman Trust Barometer (Edelman, 2018). According to the Barometer, trust in Australia continues to decline across all four key institutions: media, business, government and NGOs. Subsequently, Australia is only four percentage points above Russia- the world's least trusting country. Indonesia, conversely, continues to go against global trends with trust in its institutions rising for the second year in a row. In fact, Indonesia has the second highest level of trust in the world after China. Although it is beyond the scope of this study to fully explicate these differences,

the findings nevertheless suggest that research into public relations curriculum needs to acknowledge, as a starting point, the pre-existing worldviews and ideology of students and teachers. Such an approach would go some way to addressing the ethnocentrism inherent in much of the public relations literature and curricula, while also improving learning outcomes for students. The study therefore has practical implications for public relations educators, and it may also be of interest to practitioners working in a globalised environment.

### Keywords

*collaborative auto-ethnography, public relations education; crisis management*

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# Impact of media influence on public sentiments and trust in bike-sharing operators in Singapore

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## Introduction and purpose of study

The sharing economy is one of the fastest growing business trends in the last decade. The public bike scheme – a dockless bike sharing concept – is one commerce in today's digital era that has rapidly expanded into major cities and transformed urban modes of public transportation worldwide (Bachand-Marleau, & El-Geneidy, 2012). Given its growing popularity and tremendous impact on city life and mobility, this new phenomenon has drawn keen interest and attention from the mainstream media in Singapore. Drawing on the agenda-setting theory and guided by the attributes of the Reputation Quotient Index, this research investigates the impact of media visibility and the agenda-setting effects of news coverage on the perceived reputation of bike-sharing operators. It purposes to provide answers to three research questions:

- **RQ1:** Are bike sharing operators and the use of public bikes portrayed favorably or negatively by the media in Singapore?
- **RQ2:** What are the frames that the media use to influence perceptions of these firms?
- **RQ3:** How does the transfer of issue salience from the media agenda to the public agenda and the

attributes needed to create positive corporate reputation stack against the Reputation Quotient Index?

## Literature review

While bike-share programs may promote sustainable travel alternatives and encourage a healthier form of transportation, dockless bike-share bicycles have also cluttered streets and as a result, obstructed pedestrians and degraded urban aesthetic environment (Lim & Mack, 2018). Its excess supply of bikes which tended to generate "garbage" and indirectly promote moral hazards and resource wastage (Lim, 2018), in particular, have generated substantial media reports, and hence influenced public's perceptions on bike-sharing operators and trust in these companies to help eradicate the "ills" of the shared service. This study questions the extent to which the scrutiny these companies receive from the media has impacted the corporate reputation of the firms and subsequently support for the use of their bikes which led to the financial demise and withdrawal of four operators from the Singapore market by end 2018.

## Method

Employing word cloud generation and content analysis to determine presence of certain words and meanings in new reports, this study aims to analyze all online articles published by mainstream media in Singapore from the time bike sharing businesses were allowed to operate in January 2017 to the bowing out of four of them in December 2018. A pre-study comprising 48 random online articles retrieved from Factiva and thereafter coded and analyzed provided insights into the influence of the media on public's perception.

First, two sets of word clouds were created to allow the researchers to pick out keywords from the 48 articles. The first word cloud was generated based on the headlines of the 48 media articles, which consisted of 432 words. Setting the minimum frequency of words to appear to two, a result of 42 words out of a total of 432 words were created. The second word cloud was thereafter generated from both the headlines and the article content based again on the 48 online media articles. Minimum frequency of words to appear this time in the word cloud was set to 14, which created 100 words out of a total of 23,875 words. While word cloud provides a visual representation for easy identification of prominent and relevant words from a set of word data, our second method – content analysis – allowed for description, analysis and interpretation of the text for reliability-reproducibility results so as to enable the assessment of whether the frames were aligned with the attributes proposed in the RQI. Two coders were hired and to facilitate the coding process and to achieve consistency, a code book was developed with each item to be coded for primary attributes, the overall valence of attributes, and the sub-attributes used to frame the primary attributes. The codes were subsequently subjected to inter-coder reliability using Scott's  $\pi$  and the reliability agreement ranging from 0.87 to 0.96 was achieved for all units.

## Results and applied conclusions

The results showed that there were more negative frames (65%) as opposed to neutral and positive, suggesting the presence of agenda building and agenda-setting evidences. As for the alignment of scores against Reputation Quotient Index, our results did not reflect those outlined by scholars as enhancing corporate reputation. Given that trust will only become more crucial for businesses operating in the digital age, our paper will also discuss implications on the strategies needed for communication practitioners to engage with the media in today's evolving media environment.

## Keywords

*Media influence, reputation, agenda-setting, bike-sharing, Singapore*

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# Influencer or Celebrity? Who gains more trust on Instagram?

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## Introduction and purpose of the study

With the high penetration rate of social media in Hong Kong, using influencer to communicate to consumers has become an increasingly popular tactic, in which brands invest their spending on selected influencers to generate branded content that appeal to both the influencers' own followers and the brand's target audience (Lou & Yuan, 2018, Yodel, 2017).

In 2017, nearly 57% of beauty and fashion brands in Hong Kong claimed that they plan to invest in influencer communication (Influencer Marketing Agency Hong Kong, 2018). Why do individuals tend to "trust" influencer-generated content compared to corporate-generated content? This paper aims to investigate the elements contributing to building customer trust by comparing trust levels in branded content generated by celebrity endorsement and influencer generated content.

## Literature review

The Source Credibility Theory explains that the audience is more likely to believe in a source, if it is perceived to be credible by demonstrating positive characteristics (Umeogu, 2012), defined as trustworthiness (showing honesty, sincerity or truthfulness), attractiveness (physical likeability) and expertise (knowledge in the subject matter).

In the Social Media Influencer Model (Lou and Yuan, 2018), trust is affected by the four dimensions of trustworthiness, attractiveness, informative value and similarity.

## Methodology

An online survey was conducted, targeting Hong Kong females between the ages of 18 and 30 inclusively to understand the trust level in video content generated by celebrities and influencers on IG, and how each

dimension, informative quality, trustworthiness, attractiveness and similarity, affects the trust level. Respondents were invited to take the questionnaires through Facebook and Whatsapp. Data was collected from November 22 to 25, 2018. A total of N=153 samples were collected and 116 were valid.

## Results & Conclusion

Our results indicate that celebrity-endorsed, corporate-generated and influencer-generated content receive a similar level of trust, though the extent in which each dimension comes into play differs.

The trust in the video content of both the celebrity and the influencer is strongly related to trustworthiness and informative value ( $r > .6$ ). Similarity however, is less related to trust, with a moderate correlation in the influencer's video content ( $r > .5$ ), and a weak correlation in the celebrity's video content ( $r < .4$ ). Among the four dimensions, attractiveness is weakest in relation to trust in both the celebrity-generated and influencer-generated videos ( $r < .4$ ).

## Practical and social implications

As trustworthiness is driven by competence, integrity, benevolence and shared values (Yu, Balaji & Khong, 2015), it is recommended that practitioners consider these four attributes when selecting endorsers for their companies. In addition, practitioner can use the surveyed videos as references to further refine their own content. One example is including product sampling and objective supporting data in videos to develop informative value.

Our study focuses on IG video content generated by celebrities and influencers. Content consisting of photos and post copywriting - two factors that are essential in creating IG posts - was not included. Only one representative video for both celebrities and influencers was selected for this study. The effectiveness

of a single video may not be able to reflect the whole situation.

### Keywords

*influencer-generated content, celebrity endorsement, trust, Instagram*

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# Cultivation Strategies in Managing Government-Citizen Relationships

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## Introduction and purpose of the study

In the last two decades, "relationship" has dominated academic public relations research. The number of studies citing or using relationship management theory as a theoretical framework has increased extensively. Besides, an increased number of studies have used the relationship cultivation strategies and relationship qualities proposed by Hon and J. Grunig (1999) and J. Grunig and Huang (2000) to explore organization-public relationships in different settings. This study is an inquiry into the relationship between government and Albanians in the Republic of North Macedonia. As public relations scholarship continues to theorize about and test the effects of relationship cultivation strategies on relational quality outcomes, this study seeks to provide further testing of the cultivation strategies in the context of government – community relations. Specifically, situated within the political context of the Republic of North Macedonia, the study analyzes relationship cultivation strategies of access, positivity, openness, and assurances and explains how they contribute to achieving trust and relationship satisfaction in government-community relations.

## Literature review

In developing the theoretical framework for this dissertation, the study follows the relational perspective of public relations that views public relations as a management function that helps establish and maintain mutually beneficial relationships. The study explores the concepts of relationship cultivation and relationship outcomes (Hon and J. Grunig, 1999; J. Grunig and Huang, 2000 ). Theoretical framework is constructed on literature from the studies on relationship management and organization-public relationships, relationship cultivation strategies, and relationship quality outcomes. These are the theoretical grounds on which the relationship cultivation between government and Albanians in the Republic of North Macedonia is explored.

## Methodology

Qualitative in-depth interviewing is chosen as the main research method. Data were gathered through in-depth interviews with 19 Albanians and 20 civil servants of the central government. The sample of civil servants included 8 Albanians and 12 Macedonians. The foci of my research guided me to in-depth interviews. First of all, the interest was to explore and answer 'what' 'why' and 'how' questions rather than 'how many'. Besides, following J. Grunig's (2002) suggestions that relationships cannot always be reduced to a few fixed-response items on a questionnaire, qualitative in-depth interviews deemed more suitable to study holistically and into more details the nature of the government-Albanian relationship in the Republic of North Macedonia, and to get more insights and detailed answers from members of publics and government on how they perceive this relationship and why they do so.

## Results and conclusions

Results show that Albanians and Albanian civil servants negatively view government-Albanian relationship, and Macedonian civil servants view this relationship much more favorably. Albanians and Albanian civil servants also reported low levels of access, positivity, openness and assurances compared to Macedonian civil servants that rated government higher on these cultivation strategies. Macedonian civil servants also perceived that Albanians trust and are satisfied much more with government compared to Albanians and Albanian civil servants that claimed mistrust and dissatisfaction to characterize government-Albanian relationships. Findings of this study indicated strong relationship between access, positivity, openness, and assurances to achieving trust and relationship satisfaction in government-community relations. Participants that rated government low on relationship cultivation strategies also claimed lack of trust and satisfaction in government-community relations and vice versa. However, the results of this study indicated that the four



relationship cultivation strategies applied in this study varied in their relevance to the relational outcomes of trust and satisfaction. Openness and assurances deemed to be more relevant to government-public relationships, especially in nurturing trust between government and publics, followed by positivity and access respectively. One of the main reasons why Albanians did not trust government was lack of transparency (openness) and failure to keep promises (assurances).

### Practical and social implications

The findings of this study imply that in multi-ethnic society, citizens should all be treated equally in all government institutions. Besides, government should plan programs that cater to a broad spectrum of citizens in order not to make minority groups or ethnicities feel discriminated. Government should also

conduct transparent government practices through regular reports to let citizens know how their tax money is being spent. To those practicing government public relations, this study suggests that citizens should be informed on a regular basis about government operations and programs. The more knowledgeable are citizens the more they actively engage in the society and government activities. Moreover, use of two-way communication should be applied in communicating with citizens as it helps government hear and incorporate voices of citizens in government programs and policy making. For more feedback on government services and citizen satisfaction government should make use of the latest technology and social media platforms.

### Keywords

*relationship management, organization-public relationships, trust.*



# Trust and Reputation: Unilever and Its Development Modes

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The corporate reputation of a firm and reputation risk is becoming increasingly important because of the rise of social media and the ongoing globalization. Public distrust of the social system enables corporates to recognize the widespread impact of their business activities on society. More importantly, the development of globalization elevates the risk elements of corporate reputation. Corporates are given more social responsibility and public expectations. More and more people are demanding that corporates be responsible for issues of general concern to society in order to create a fairer and more harmonious international society. The public expects corporates to reconcile the interests of shareholders and society when dealing with public goods. The traditional impression of corporates tends to be profit-driven and cost-minimizing, which to a large extent seems to stand on the opposite side of global public goods production. However, through the case of Unilever, one of world's largest consumer goods companies, I have learned that profits and public goods are not contradictory--businesses have huge potential to reach a win-win of private and public interests.

**The thesis is to deal with three key questions, and they are:**

1. What is the internal relationship between corporate reputation and corporate development?
2. How does Unilever use innovative and inclusive business development models to build sustainable development and positive corporate reputation?
3. As a value-driven corporate, how does Unilever strike a balance between business success and corporate responsibility?

## Literature Review

Within the reputation paradigm, there is arguably no one source as yet which captures the entirety of the concept of reputation. Not surprisingly, CEOs see corporate reputation as a valuable intangible asset (Institute of Directors 1999). A favourable reputation encourages shareholders to invest in a company; it attracts good staff, retains customers (Markham 1972) and correlates with superior overall returns (Robert and Dowling 1997; Vergin and Qoronfleh 1998). Corporate reputation is a 'soft' concept. A good corporate reputation is vital for an organization to perform well. Nurturing trust brings about direct opportunities for any business.

An intact reputation makes it easier to create customer bonds and attract competent personnel. It increases access to capital and reduces credit-related costs. Generally, a superior reputation erects for companies a barrier that forestalls customer loss, and keeps market predators at bay (Schwaiger 2004). Yet, merely listing such economic functions – however central they may be – by no means does justice to the importance of reputation. For, in our society at large, reputation performs a fundamental steering function.

In the global age, corporate social responsibility, or social reputation, has become significantly more important. On the one hand, it is important to note that ethical questions have assumed central news value in the international media arena. Questions about 'good' and 'bad' have become core ratings generators in modern journalism. On the other hand, politics has – crucially – not been able to keep up with the globalisation of the economy. Because politics, which for the most part

operates at nation-state level, is unable to ensure social well-being on a global scale, pressure has increased on multinationals to assume social responsibility. (Mark Eisenegger 2009).

Unilever has built a reputation as a values driven business that has balanced commercial success with corporate responsibility. Over the past decade it has put sustainability at the heart of its operational strategy, innovating to reduce packaging and its environmental impact. The establishment of Unilever's good corporate reputation is based on its internal innovative corporate development model and highly transparent internal management model, as well as on its external partnership platform based on trust with its stakeholders.

**Internally,** Unilever has launched Unilever Sustainable Living Program (USLP) to make its products more environmentally friendly and meet the needs of consumers in emerging markets.

**Externally,** Unilever seeks to actively engage with governments, intergovernmental organisations, regulators, customers, suppliers, investors, civil society organisations, academics and individual concerned citizens to create an environment that is supportive of solutions in the face of the big sustainability and health challenges the world faces.

## Methods

This paper mainly uses the following methods to study:

- **Firstly, the case analysis method.** Taking Unilever's successful development as an example, this paper explores how multinational companies can build sustainable growth and positive corporate reputation through innovative and inclusive business models.
- **Secondly, the interdisciplinary approach.** In this paper, the theory and method of management, politics, sociology and other disciplines are used to study Unilever's organizational management

model and rules. In particular, Unilever Sustainable Life Plan (USLP) creates an environment to support solutions to meet the huge sustainability and health challenges facing the world. It enables Unilever to achieve win-win economic and social benefits, and has made outstanding contributions to global environmental governance.

## Results and conclusions

In conclusion, leaders in the global community should acknowledge the potential and limitations of the private sector in producing global public goods and help to strengthen its capacity. They can do so by firstly reshaping the values of the business world to be inclusive of social interests; secondly, developing multilateral partnerships and networks that optimize different stakeholders' capabilities, and thirdly, keeping the checks and balances on private sector through continuous evaluation of its practices.

Although the private sector's involvement in global governance is still at an early stage, companies like Unilever have shown the opportunities and possibilities for private sectors as leaders in an increasingly interconnected and diverse global public discourse.

## Practical and social implications

**Establish a good business model.** Unilever's innovative development model can provide a good model and help to provide new guidance and programs for the development of multinational corporates.

**Participation in global governance.** Unilever's sustainable business model is the beginning of the private sector's global governance capacity-building, and also makes corporates an important member in global governance.

**Establish a win-win model.** Unilever's successful model has achieved a win-win situation between economic interests and social interests. Unilever not only helps to achieve the goal of sustainable development, but also contributes to a more equitable society.

# Stakeholders' reactions to crisis in the food industry: Insights from data mining of social media posts

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## Literature review

Situational crisis communication theory (SCCT) aims to provide organizations with guidelines for the right approach to respond to stakeholders' various reactions to crisis (Coombs, 2014). Stakeholders' negative reactions to crisis are dependent on various factors such as damages caused by the crisis, past crises experienced by the same company, and the attribution of responsibility. Social media sites have become a major platform for stakeholders to react and share their concerns and opinions during crises (Tse et al., 2018).

SCCT is based on the Attribution Theory, which is an umbrella term that describes and explains the way people assign causes to experienced events. The theory explains peoples' emotional experiences and subsequent behaviors. According to the theory, people differ in their reactions to events in a variety of aspects. Thus, the study of stakeholders' posts during crises is vital for organizations in order to execute effective crisis management and to regain stakeholders' trust.

Most studies strategically focus on company-related issues raised by stakeholders, in order to propose relevant response strategies. However, a deeper investigation into the variety of issues regarding crisis, which are not necessarily company related, is lacking. There is a need for a comprehensive framework which integrates all relevant players and issues. Moreover, the use of data mining techniques for empirical research

that allows for a deeper investigation into issues raised by stakeholders during crisis is still scarce.

Using automated content analysis, this article analyzes the content of stakeholders' social media posts during the 2016 Unilever-Telma cornflakes crisis in Israel. Three major questions are raised and discussed: (a) What are the most frequent issues expressed by consumers when discussing the crisis and the involved brands? (b) Are these issues on a company-related scope, an industry scope, or other? (c) What is the relationship between the issues raised by consumers?

## Methodology

The study uses the case study of the Unilever-Telma cornflakes crisis over the course of one month in the summer of 2016. The crisis involved the tainting of the production lines of several brands with the salmonella bacteria. Unilever did not report the problem to the health ministry or the public and admitted the problem only after it was revealed by the media. The phenomenon was repeated several times over the course of the month until it was resolved.

Out of approximately 23,000 social media posts about cornflakes during the crisis, 9,929 posts were found to include both cornflakes brands and crisis-related terms. We utilized automated content analysis techniques based on Natural Language Processing (NLP). Though the content analyzed by computer program is dependent on researchers' subjective decisions on

variables, statistical NLP allows researchers to observe phenomena and draw valuable conclusions from a large amount of text. This is not a simple task in the age of electronic communication and big data (Manning et al., 1999).

## Results and conclusion

Path analysis was conducted among the several variables created by the data mining technique (using SEM). This process helps produce the issues raised most frequently by consumers in discussing the crisis and the category-involved brands. The procedure suggested by Bagozzi and Edwards (1998) was followed, and the model, which provides a better fit, was retained as the final model to display the relationship between the issues.

The path analysis results show that the overall fit statistics exhibit an acceptable level of fit ( $\chi^2$  value = 20.27 (12),  $\chi^2/Df < 2$ ,  $p > .05$ ; CFI = 1.000; NFI = .999; RMSEA = .008), indicating that the path model is valid. The path model, regression standardized coefficients, and their significance are depicted in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Path analysis results<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Path parameters are standardized parameter estimates.

\*\*  $p < .01$

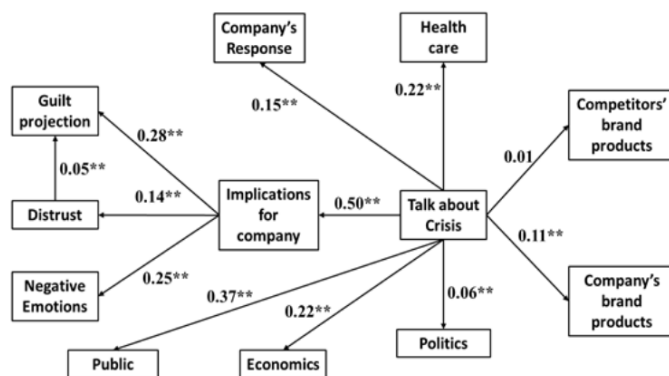


Figure 1 displays the most frequently raised issues. It demonstrates that the posts were significantly related to the brands involved in the crisis rather than their competitors. Additionally, two major issue paths are depicted: a. Issues on a company-related scope: the higher relationship path in posts about the crisis is Unilever related. This represents a negative discourse involving implications for the company, guilt projection, distrust, and negative emotions. Additionally, discourse regarding Unilever's responses to the crises is connected to the discourse about the crisis. b. The second path is outside the industry scope: the health-care systems, politics, economics, and the public. Thus, the discourse about the crisis expands beyond the company scope of business and involves additional players.

The implications for practice emphasize the need for broader strategies in order to handle both micro and macro issues. Socially, this research gives voice to issues that concern the public during crises, both as individuals and as a community.

## Keywords

*Situational crisis communication theory; Crisis management; Social media; Data mining*

# Big Data Analyses on the Basis of Social Listening for Reputation Management

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## Introduction and purpose of the study/research question

According to Fombrun (1996, p. 37 and 72) corporate reputation is "the overall estimation in which a company is held by its constituents". It "is a perceptual representation of a company's past actions and future prospects that describes the firm's overall appeal to all of its key constituents when compared with other leading rivals". It develops in a triad of good deeds, good communication and good relations with others (Aula and Mantere 2008). A reputation management strategy may be developed on the basis of an analysis of different networks within and outside of the company and the opinions that develop within them. These considerations are interesting as they ascertain that the company's own reputation does not really lie in the hands of the company itself, since it results from communication in networks within and outside of the company. Especially in social media every contact between companies and any of their stakeholders can result in the enhancement or weakening of the reputation. It can only be partially managed by communicative measures. (Aula/Mantere 2008; pp. 179)

Against this background we will discuss the following research question in this study: To what extent can reputation be measured by analyzing social media conversations?

## Literature review

In fact there already are a number of cases in point in scientific literature with content analyses on the basis of Internet communication (for example in fields of the automobile industry, consumer behaviour or political communication).

With regard to the importance of social media analytics for reputation management, Aula (2010, pp. 45-47) explains that social media play a crucial role for the reputation of companies. But there have not been any considerable developments of big data analyses on the basis of social listening for reputation management, although according to Holsapple et al. (2014, p. 5) "social media analytics" and "social listening" can also be used to observe and maintain the internal and external reputation of companies. These terms describe two successive steps required for information processing for reputation management: Statements on the Internet are collected – the listening – and then the analytic consolidation takes place.

## Methodology

Social listening is effected by crawling websites in order to find statements about defined companies on the Internet with the aid of search strings and to store them in a database. In principle, this technology is very advanced; every search engine today supplies a variety of sources on the Internet which then only have to be read out. Artificial intelligence (AI) that analyses

the statements found in linguistic terms and prepares them for reputation analysis can be used for such an analysis. The authors have developed an approach to collect and analyze the data with a special algorithm and applied them to the example of a national reputation study, which examined the 5,000 highest-employment companies in Germany in 2018.

### Results and conclusions

The basis for reputation measurement is a model from the US market research company Harris Interactive with the central statement that the reputation of a company depends on five dimensions which has been developed further. The decisive factor here is that the individual dimensions have an influence on the overall reputation, but also correlate with each other. The data collected in social media was allocated to the different reputation dimensions and finally used to get a total score which expresses the reputation of the company. Thus our results show that the analysis of social media conversations can contribute valuable results to reputation measurement.

### Limitations of the study/future research

A major limitation of the study is that the data is not representative for the total population. Furthermore, the results can be distorted as indifferent people may not express themselves in social media about companies and their activities, but only fans and "haters". Future research should deal with a specification

of the model taking aspects like a differentiation of the relevance of online channels - online media, forums, blogs, communities, social media - for reputation development.

### Practical and social implications

The study has a high value for reputation management and building trust. It also shows an interesting application of artificial intelligence which may contribute to the further development of respective solutions for communication management.

### Keywords

*Reputation management, optimal reputation, social listening, big data*

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Tadej Golob  
writer  
Leninov park, 2018

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